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PUBLISHED THREE TIMES A MONTH

Adventure

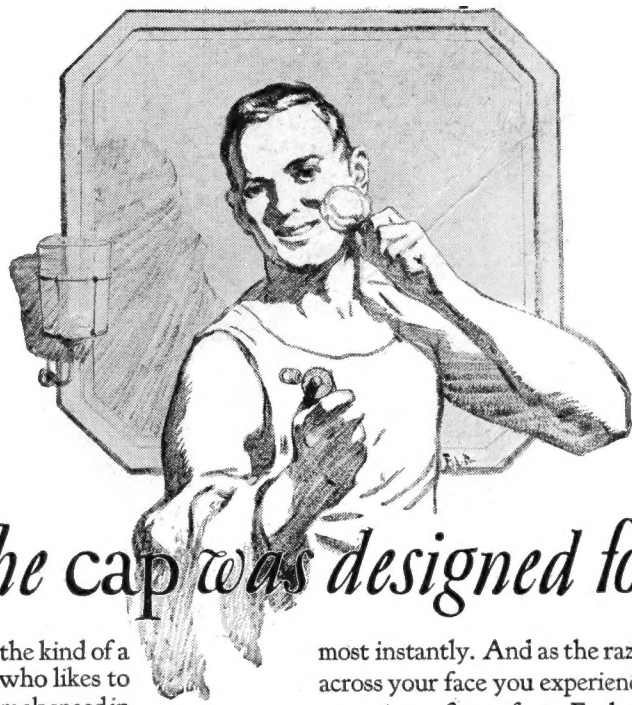
Leonard H. Nason
Berton Braley
Talbot Mundy
John Webb
F. R. Buckley
Nevil Henshaw
Royce Brier
Alan LeMay
George E. Holt

1 Complete Novel
1 Complete Novelette

NOVEMBER 10th ISSUE, 1924
VOL. XLIX No. 4

ADVENTURE

25 Cents



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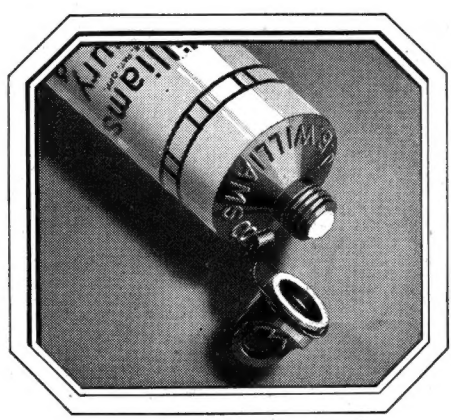

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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One Novel and Two Novelettes Complete

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THE revenue officers were so anxious to get hold of the moonshiners that they offered a big reward for information leading to their arrest. "*Big Un*," having heard a sermon broadcasted from the mission boat, decided he'd earn the reward and buy a radio outfit. "MISSISSIPPI MOONSHINE," a story of the big river's backwaters, a complete novelette by William P. Barron, in the next issue.

THE old viking's statesmanship was superior to his self-esteem; personal advancement was second to his sense of justice. And so, when the battle-lines were formed, he urged *King Ingi* to follow a course that man was loath to take. "SWAIN'S OUTLAWING," a complete novelette by Arthur D. Howden Smith, in the next issue.

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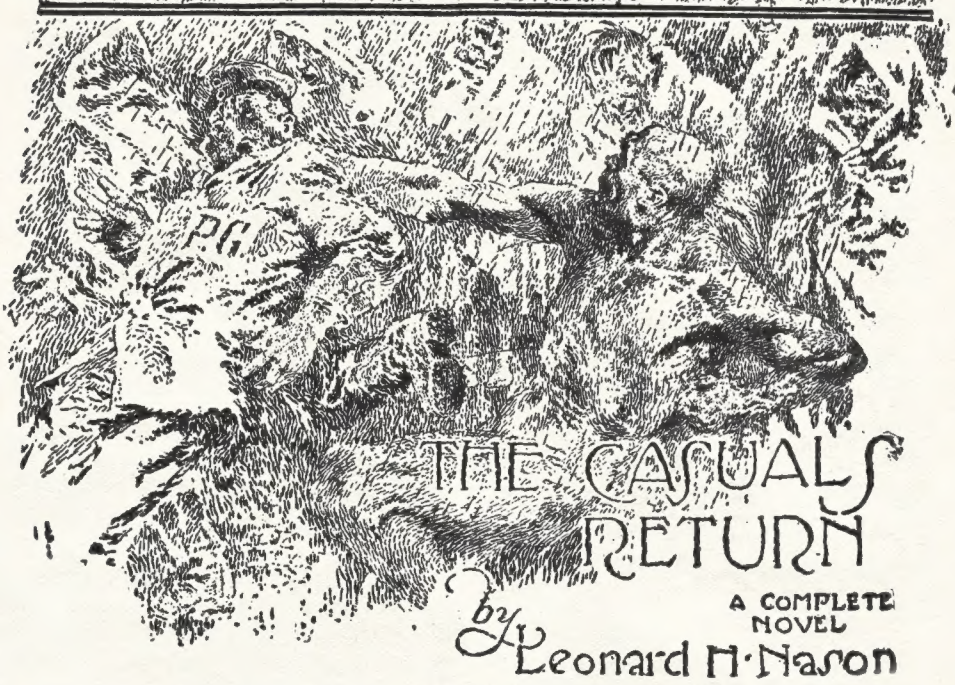

THE CASUAL'S RETURN

A COMPLETE NOVEL

by Leonard H. Nason

Author of "A Hearty Meal," "Rockets at Daybreak," etc.

WHEN he had crossed the intersection of roads the man sat down. Along one of the buildings there was a bench and the reflected sunlight was warm to the man's back. He looked ruefully at his leather puttees and shiny shoes, for the dust of the road had covered them with a light film. There was dust on his uniform, too, and in his nose. It powdered his hat and was thick upon the bench where he sat. The air was filled with it.

It was the hour of noon and the men that dwelled in these wooden buildings that stood so thickly round about, were returning to their dinner. Soldiers, soldiers, soldiers. Wherever the eye rested, there was a soldier.

Through the open windows could be seen many of them, some in blouses, some in shirts and some in nothing. They smoked, waved towels, sang, cleaned rifles, fought, lounged on the sills, called to acquaintances in the road and ran aimlessly in and out. A company returning from drill went by, raising more dust. They marched at route order, their faces streaked with sweat and their rifles pointing every which way.

Ahead marched two men looking straight to the front and very full of dignity. They were the captain and the first sergeant. The first lieutenant was somewhere out of sight in the dust. At the rear of the column, where he could breathe all the dust and see with difficulty the back of the neck of the man ahead of him, was another man, a pitiful figure indeed. This was the second

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lieutenant, always behind, like a dog's tail, and not half so useful. When the company had passed the man on the bench, who had risen to salute the officers, sat down again.

"Have I got to join a madhouse like that?" he asked himself.

He consulted a paper that he held in his hand, and then, resting his chin on his clenched fist, he proceeded to meditate. This man was faultlessly attired in a uniform that fitted him like his skin. It had just the proper flare of skirt, and height of collar and snugness of waistline. His campaign hat was clearly a product of the hand of Stetson and the red cord upon it was of silk. There were three stripes upon the man's arm. A sergeant of artillery by the uniform and a regular by the cut thereof. He looked sadly down a vista of unpainted barracks, where men ran about from one building to the other, waving mess-kits.

"Well," said the man on the bench, "if I'm going to do something, I'd better do it quick, or I won't get any dinner."

Still he remained on the bench. The sun was hot and the late spring air drowsy, but it was none too warm for the man on the bench. He liked to feel the sun baking him in front and the heat rising from the wall of the building against his back. Bugles began to trill and whistles to blow. There was a clattering of feet in all the barracks and lines began to form. A column of negro labor troops tramped by, pick and shovel on shoulder. Two dungaree clad prisoners passed, pushing a little cart and gathering cigaret butts and bits of paper. A sentry followed them, a shotgun in the crook of his arm.

The man on the bench watched this group with interest. The two prisoners dragged one foot after the other, slowly, making every movement consume as much time as possible, taking thirty seconds to spear a piece of paper and unspear it into the little cart. The sentry looked about him with a bored air.

The man on the bench stood up.

"Let's go," he said to himself. "This place is in the next block. I'll have a look at it anyway."

He waited until a company going to drill had passed and then went down the street. Opposite another one of those unpainted box-like buildings he stopped again. Before this building were a number of trunk lockers standing on end with their lids open. Some bedding rolls were hung over trestles. There were some little pots with brushes sticking from them, and a man who had just finished a cigaret took a brush and, dipping it in a pot, began to paint upon the lid of a foot locker.

The sergeant of artillery drew near and looked at the device that was being painted. The principal figure of the device was the figure "nine." This same figure was on the other lockers and on the bedding rolls. The sergeant approached the painter.

"Say," said he, "is this where the Ninth Trench Mortar Battery hangs out?"

"Yuh!" said the painter without looking up.

"How do they eat here?"

"Rotten!" said the painter. "We're just organizin'."

"No cook, huh, and a jaw-bone mess sergeant, and no mess fund?"

"You said it," said the painter. "Git outta my light."

"That settles it," said the sergeant.

He took out the slip of paper that he had consulted before and opened it. For the hundredth time he read the typewritten lines:

Special Order No. 42. Extract. The following named enlisted men, having been relieved from duty with their respective regiments, will report without delay to the commanding officer Ninth Trench Mortar Battery, Port of Debarkation. Sgt. Robert Eadie, Battery A, 76th Field Artillery.

The sergeant read this order several times, looked up at the sky and the little clouds floating there and then slowly tore the paper into bits. These he tossed into the air and watched them scatter over the roadway. A slight shadow fell across his face.

"That was a bright thing to do," he muttered. "Tomorrow I may be around here picking those up again, with a bold guard giving directions. Well, Steve Brodie is no better man than I am."

THE sergeant walked briskly back along the road until be came to a low building bearing the sign:

OVERSEAS CASUALS

There was a door at either end. At the far door men went in alone, but at the near door they came out in groups and were conducted across the road into the depths of the cantonment. The guide marched in the rear, perhaps for the sake of politeness, or

perhaps to protect the other men from an accidental discharge of the shotgun he carried over his shoulder.

The sergeant entered the farther door and joined the line that stood against the wall of the building. There were only a few men in line and they moved along rapidly. At the head of the line was a desk at which a slight, calm-faced soldier sat.

"What's your outfit?" he asked the man at the head of the line.

"Thirtieth Infantry."

The man at the desk consulted a list.

"They gone overseas," he said.

The man in line shifted his weight from one foot to the other.

"Uhhuh," said he.

"Where was you when they went?" asked the calm man at the desk.

"I was on—ahem—pass," said the man in line. "It's funny they'd go and leave me, ain't it?"

Apparently it was not, for no one smiled.

"Have you got your pass wit' you?" inquired the calm man at the desk.

"Well, no. You see the first sergeant was gonna give me one, but I had to catch a quick train, an' so I come off——"

A wave of the calm man's pen cut short the tale.

"Go this way," directed the man at the desk.

The man at the head of the line started off swiftly enough toward the door that opened into the pleasant sunlight again. Just as he reached it, an arm shot out and barred his path.

"What's your hurry?" asked a rough man, who had a mouthful of licorice.

"I ain't in no hurry," said the other mildly, his eye taking in the other's bulging cartridge belt, his bayonet, his holster flap tied back away from his pistol and the cavernous muzzle of his shotgun.

"No," said the first man, "I ain't in the slightest hurry."

"Well, that's lucky," said the man who barred the door, "fer you ain't gonna go nowheres for some time. Sit down, now, an' keep cool a minute."

The first man sat down with a slight sigh. He had expected it anyway.

Sergeant Eadie waited patiently while the rest of the men were disposed of. One man really had a travel order, for he had been left behind in hospital, but the others had nothing, not even an alibi.

The man behind the desk listened politely and then waved his pen and the man before the desk sat down in the group at the other door. Then the sergeant stood at the desk.

"A Battery, 76th," said he. "They've been gone a month. Here's my leave."

He tossed a leave on the desk and the calm man picked it up. He riffled the sheets and consulted a calendar.

"This here leave's up two weeks ago," he remarked.

"I wouldn't have come back at all," said the sergeant, "only my money gave out."

The man behind the desk was startled out of his calm.

"*Shsshsh!*" he said. "Don't make no cracks like that. They'll hang a lead bracelet round your neck for less'n that. Boy, don't chuck your weight none thataway. You birds goin' absent an' showin' up after your outfit's gone are gonna ketch —— from now on, I ain't kiddin' yuh. There's new orders out. Take 'em away, Pete."

This last to the rough man with the weapons.

"Forward—ho," said the rough man. "Straight across the road an' down the street. I'll tell yuh when to stop, an' if any one starts to go, I'll help him with a little dust outta this here,"—slapping his shotgun. "Perceed!"

They proceeded. Across the road, up the slope between the barracks to the crest of a slight hill, where there was a separate block of barracks, eight or nine of them, huddled by themselves. The men viewed these barracks with a slight quickening of the heart. A high, wide fence surrounded them, a fence of barbed wire, and at the corners of the fence were watch towers, with searchlights atop. In the middle of the fence was a great gate that swung open at their approach. The men passed in and the gate swung slowly to. *Clank!*

"Well," said Eadie. "So this is Paris!"

The men looked at him askance.

Two more guards appeared and, having called the names of the prisoners, signed a receipt for them and the rough man took his departure.

"Hey," called the sergeant after him. "What is this place?"

"It's where they puts yellar lice what ain't got the guts to go overseas with their outfits, so's the other fellars won't string 'em up by the ears."

"My," said the sergeant, "how interesting! No chance of being lynched or anything is there?"

The rough guard seemed struggling to find fitting answer, but his words strangled him.

"Huh!" he grunted finally, and went back after more victims.

AFTER a dinner of some kind of mysterious meat, potatoes and cold coffee, the newcomers were led to a barrack and told to pick themselves a bunk. Eadie went up to the second story and finding one that had no blankets on it sat down. It was not much of a bunk, just a bent piece of tubing at head and foot and a wide meshed spring between. There was a thin pad on it that might once have been gaily colored, but multitudes of sleeping soldiers had removed most of the pattern so that it now possessed a mild neutral color. The spring sank alarmingly when Eadie sat down.

"Well, I'm in jail," he thought, "that's the first step. Let's hope something happens right soon. It wouldn't be much fun to stay here any length of time."

Another man came clambering up the stairs from the ground floor and, seeing Eadie sitting there, came over to him and cast a cheap suitcase on the next bunk to the sergeant. The newcomer was built like a behemoth. He had tremendous shoulders, great freckled hands liberally sprinkled with long red hairs, a lowering, forbidding face and tremendous eyebrows. He sat down in turn on his bed and removed his campaign hat. He was as bald as a gun butt, save for a flame of red hair around the base of his skull.

"Howdy," began the hairy man, unbuttoning his blouse.

"Good," answered Eadie.

The hairy man began a quest of the pockets of his blouse, turning it over and over on the bed.

"—— these here things," said he, "I always lose things in 'em an' then look through the pockets on the same side half a dozen times. I wisht I could remember to look before I took off the coat!"

Finally he found what he sought, a plug of tobacco from which he wrenched a chew. While his jaws and tongue worked this into a convenient size for tucking into his cheek, he began to feel in first one and then the other pocket of his breeches.

"Consarn!" he muttered. "Where'n the nation did I put that? Ah!"

He drew out a small round box, seemingly of red tin, from which he took a dark substance. With this he lined his jaws, tucking it well under his upper lip. Eadie looked over to see what the box contained.

"Snuff," said the other, noting Eadie's gaze. "Have some?"

"No, thanks," said Eadie.

"There now," continued the other man, loosening his shirt collar. "I feel better. Have you got a cigaret?"

The sergeant gave him one and watched it being lighted.

"Don't you find cigarets mild?" asked Eadie.

"Well, yes," said the hairy man, "I do. I prefers cigars, to tell the truth, but few soldiers carries cigars, and them that do, don't carry 'em to give away."

"That's so," agreed Eadie.

The hairy man gushed smoke from nose and mouth.

"What you in for?" he asked.

"Overstaying leave," said Eadie.

"Overstayin' leave?" cried the other man. "How come you got a leave when your outfit was goin' overseas?"

"Well, it's a long story," said Eadie. "I got banged up in a runaway and was in hospital for about three months. Well, the longer I stayed and the more they whittled on me the worse I got, so I moaned to my colonel and he got me a leave and I went to a civilian hospital and got fixed up. How about you?"

"Investments brung me here," said the other man.

"You're crazier than a coot! What do you mean investments?"

"Sure thing investments. Every pay day I invested ten nice clean green ones, cryin' aloud that I could roll three sevens in a row. Any one that didn't believe might put a ten dollar bill on one o' my ones and see for himself. When I got ten doubters I rolled. I done that for close to a year an' last month —— if I didn't win. Hundred bucks I made. We was comin' from Camp Taylor to New York, so I saved 'em. Then away I went A. W. O. loose. Huh!" Smoke erupted from every pore.

"I bet you had a wild time!" commented the sergeant.

"Huh!"

The hairy man heaved to his feet and crossing to a window, spat therefrom.

"Huh!" he continued, wiping his mouth. "I went into a place to buy me a little drink when I got off the train. Just a little drink to wash the coal dust outta my throat. 'What'll it be?' says the dispenser. I took out my roll to skin off a ten spot I wanted to bust. 'Where am I?' I inquires. I was in a gutter sometime the next mornin'. Well, when I got outta jail I come here an' turned in. This mornin' it was."

"What did you get put in jail for?" asked Eadie. "They wouldn't put you in jail for sleeping in the gutter. What happened? Did some one crack you over the skull or the bartender slip a sleep-berry in your booze or what?"

"I don't know what happened. I had a headache an' there I was. Well, when I got up an' found I didn't have no penny in my pocket outta that hundred bucks, only a dollar I had in my shoe, an' nothin' to show for it, I felt pretty sore. I hunted a cop an' told him all the sad yarn an' he put me in jail. That's all the sympathy I got."

"Aw nix," laughed Eadie. "You mean you woke up in jail and dreamed it."

"No, I didn't wake up in jail," denied the hairy man. "That cop said something about my dreamin' it an' never havin' a hundred cents an' bein' a army bum and like o' that, so I leaned on his eye an' not bein' able to pay no fine for it—ten dollars for putting a hoop round his eye was cheap enough—I went to jail an' worked it out." The hairy man spat again.

"Tell me," said he, pointing to Eadie's stripes, "they'll take them offa you, won't they?"

"They might," said Eadie, grinning. "It's all in the game. They say it's healthy for a man to shed his stripes every so often, like a snake sheds its skin. Anyway I'd get made again when I get back to my outfit."

"Well," said the hairy man, "I'm glad I'm a buck. Nothin' to lose an' no responsibilities. All I got to do is to look after myself."

"You've got the right idea," agreed the sergeant. "The easiest thing I know is gettingbusted. And for eight dollars a month difference, I can't see the advantage."

"Whyncha resign?" asked the hairy man.

"Well," answered Eadie, "that's something different. Just because I'm consoling myself in case I should get broke is no sign I don't like to be a sergeant!"

"You answer for me!" said the other. "I wish I had a dollar for every guy that's told me he could 'a' been a corporal, only he didn't want to take it. Yessir, if I had a dollar for every one o' them, I'd go absent again this minute. I wonder when we eat. You don't suppose they put us on bread an' water, do you? I never was in a strange mill before."

"No, no bread and water," said the sergeant. "Didn't you get any dinner? I had some, such as it was."

"No," sighed the hairy man. "I didn't have no dinner. I wasn't ast nuthin' only how would I like a good kick in the nose for not standin' to attention for some looey. I ain't got eyes in the back o' my skull. And anyways I was thinkin' of somethin' else." He chewed meditatively for a while. "When I can't eat, I can sleep," he declared at last, and taking off his shoes and puttees, he lay back upon the bunk and turned on his side.

EADIE took off his hat and blouse. He and the man on the other bunk were the only occupants of the room. Evidently the rest of the men were at work. Work! Eadie felt a slight falling away of his stomach. He knew what work they were probably doing. Spreading foul straw to dry behind the stables, sweeping out latrines, carrying garbage or washing greasy pans in the officers' mess. Prisoners weren't given the choicest jobs.

The sergeant looked out of the dirty window, across to the next barrack. Flies boomed against the panes, and the hairy man breathed heavily in his slumbers. Beyond the next barracks was the barbed wire stockade, fortunately out of sight.

"I fear," said the sergeant to himself, "that I've bitten off more than I can chew. Suppose I spend about six months here picking up paper and shoveling out stables?"

His eye lighted on his blouse, and the three stripes upon the arm thereof, sewed on very doggily with baseball stitch and red silk.

"Suppose I have to kiss them goodby, too? I've held on to 'em like grim death to a dead chink for nearly a year and I'd hate to lose them now."

The flies buzzed and Eadie shoved up the window to drive them forth. A warm breeze blew in. He could hear feet on the gravel, a heavy tread, probably a relief of the guard. From the next block, beyond the stockade, came the crack of a baseball bat and excited cries. It was Spring, and Spring is no time for a man to be in prison.

"No, sir!" cried the sergeant suddenly, "I'm going through with it! I've got the straight dope and I'm going to fight this war in my own outfit!"

He looked quickly at the hairy man to see if he had awakened, but the other slumbered heavily.

"Yup," continued the sergeant in a softer tone, "I'm going to get back to my outfit if I have to swim."

Just before retreat the other men that lived in that barrack came back. When the whistle blew they lined up in their dungarees and were checked over carefully.

"Tonight," announced the acting first sergeant, "there'll be a full pack inspection, show down on the bunks. Any one that's shy any article of equipment, can draw it before seven o'clock."

Then the men were dismissed. The band was too far off to be heard, so that the ceremonious part of the formation was omitted.

"What's the idea of this full pack inspection?" Eadie asked the man ahead of him in the supper line.

"Have one every coupla days," answered the man.

"I know, but prisoners don't usually take anything to the mill but a pair of blankets."

"We ain't real prisoners. None o' these guys did anything but overstay leave or go absent. They got a stall goin' around that a guy that goes absent gets sent overseas immediately, an' they issue out tin hats and all that stuff just to scare us."

"Don't you think they'll ship us over right away?"

"No, I don't. There's too much work to do. See that skinny guy over there? The feller with the shirt that's got sleeves that don't match? Well, he's been absent about six times. Every time he does his month and gets assigned to an outfit to go overseas he beats it to Tenafly an' don't come back till they go. There's a lot like him. Fat chance o' sendin' him across."

"I read in the paper," said Eadie, "that they sure meant it this time when they said that a bird that overstayed or went A. W. O. L. went across on the first boat."

"'Sall bull," answered the other man. "I don't believe it."

The door of the mess shack swung open just then and the line slid through the doorway like a ravenous snake.

During the meal a sergeant with a list of names in his hand touched Eadie on the shoulder. "Right after supper," said he, "report to the supply sergeant. Draw an outfit an' beat it back as quick as you can. Every one gets a jab an' vaccinated before the inspection."

"Hey," cried Eadie, "I've been jabbed three times already. Man, I've got enough triple typhoid in me to sterilize the Philippines."

"Got any papers to show it?"

"No, but——"

"Jab for you. It's good for yuh. Keeps you from havin' typhoid. Cost you twenty-five bucks on the outside."

"Now, listen——"

"Shut up! You're gonna get a jab an' that's all there is to it!"

Perceiving that every face in the mess hall was turned in his direction, Eadie held his peace. If they wanted to fill his veins full of antityphoid serum there was no way to stop them. It would take three weeks to do it properly, though, and he hoped he'd be at sea before the expiration of that time.

WHEN he returned from the supply sergeant, burdened with tin hat, shelter half and enough tinware to stock a hardware store, he found the hairy man trying to dispose his own store of useful articles on his bunk.

"There's a bunk down there in the corner made up the way we're supposed to do ours," said the hairy man, "but I can't seem to fit my stuff the way he does his."

"Let's go look at it," said Eadie, and casting his burden on the floor, he and the other went down to the specimen bunk.

It was a neat looking affair. The shelter half was spread out and at one end were two blankets, at the other slicker and overcoat. Between the two were disposed in an orderly manner, tent pins and poles, spare socks and underwear, extra hobnails, steel helmet, mess-kit, bacon and condiment can, razor, soap and towels, a Red Cross helmet and sweater and a pack carrier.

"That's simple enough to lay out," said Eadie.

"You try it," advised the other.

They went back to their own corner and speedily became engulfed in a sea of clothing and hardware. Eadie spent a long time trying to put his haversack and pack carrier together, but finally flung it on the floor.

"Say," asked the other with interest, "don't you never swear?"

"No," said the sergeant, "I don't. Any leatherhead can swear, but it takes a man to lay off it."

"Might be so," agreed the other, "but it ain't good to bottle up all that feeling in a man. If he can say a few words he feels better. You're a good guy, though, if you are a sergeant. What's your name? Mine's Jacob Brown."

"Mine's Eadie," answered the sergeant, and they struck hands. "Do you know how this puzzle works? My outfit never had them. The dismounted men were issued Spanish War haversacks and canteens to match, and that's what they had when I left the outfit."

"I'll show you," said Brown, "but we better prospect a little kerosene to get the cosmoline offen these rifles with. This inspection's liable to occur right soon."

This appearing to be a good suggestion, the two went about it. They were able to borrow a wash basin full of gasoline from a man on the lower floor. This basin had already been used by a goodly number and the liquid therein was quite thick and gooey, but it did take the cosmoline off. In the midst of the operation three men entered the barracks hastily and a table having been dragged in, the three removed their coats. Members of the guard appeared and the acting top kick who ordered all to line up.

"Here's for the jab," said Eadie with a sinking heart, and took his place near the head of the line to have it over with as soon as possible.

Eadie had had jabs before and knew that those that get the first have the better time of it.

One of the three newcomers was a doctor, and having put a needle on a syringe, he held the syringe to the light, and squirted a little liquid out, to see that it worked.

"Let's go," he commanded.

One of his helpers went down the line directing all to bare their arms and when this was done he put a dab of iodin on each one, just under the shoulder muscle. The doctor tucked back his cuffs. *Sock!* He drove the needle into an arm. He discharged its contents into the soldier and with a quick motion wrenched the needle out again. The assistant stepped up to dab a second circle of iodin on the arm. *Thud!* The recipient of the jab keeled over in a heap.

"Drag him out into the air," directed the doctor, shooting a little stream of juice out of his needle toward the electric light. "Drag him out and revive him. He's got to be vaccinated yet."

Eadie was fourth in line. He got his jab and gave his name to the third member of the medical party.

"Whoa," cried this last as Eadie was about to go out.

"Stick around; we got to vaccinate you just as soon as every one gets their shot."

Eadie, full of rage, sat sadly down on a bunk. His stomach was doing a Highland fling and his head ached. The sting in his arm was gradually going away.

"If I'd gone to that trench mortar outfit," he thought bitterly, "I'd have escaped all this. They'd got my service record probably. Now look at the mess I've got to go through. Maybe they wouldn't have my service record, too, at that, and I'd have to go through it just the same."

There was the crash of a falling body and two grunting men bore out a third and added him to the line outside the door. Eadie saw that it was his new friend Brown.

"These big guys seem to go out the quickest," he thought. "But then, the doc is down at the lower end of the line now, and his old needle must be pretty dull."

"Up on your feet," cried the busy assistant. "Left sleeve up! Chase in that crowd from outside. No duckin', now, or we'll vaccinate you lyin' down. Chase 'em in, sergeant."

The pallid ones came in from outdoors and the sergeant could be heard urging the others to get up on their feet and be men, and how the —— could they face the Germans if they couldn't stand a little shot in the arm.

"Huh," thought Eadie, as the assistant scraped at his arm with a bit of broken bottle. "There's lots more to this war stuff than fighting Germans. If they've got

anything over there that's worse than this I'd like to know what it is."

The doctor came down the line, working in sweating haste, and having spattered a little vaccine on each arm where the blood was, directed the men to let it dry. The man in front of Eadie took one look at the doctor and went over sidewise like a felled tree.

"Carry him out," directed the doctor. "Just let me put a little stuff on his arm first." He bent over and applied the vaccine to the prostrate man. "Now take him away," he directed. No one moved. "Come, come," cried the doctor, dabbing at Eadie's arm, "carry out that man! What are you waiting for? You two men, grab hold of him!"

The doctor indicated two sad soldiers who had had their shot and vaccination.

"We gotta couple o' sore arms," these two informed him. "We can't carry nothin'."

The truth of their statement was apparent even to the doctor. Eadie bent over the fallen man and as he did so his sleeve slipped down. He hurriedly caught it back again and resumed his former position. After a while he stole a cautious look at his arm and his heart rose. The vaccine was all gone. A quick movement as he bent over had transferred it from his arm to his shirt sleeve, where it could do no harm.

More men fell heavily to the floor, but they lay where they fell this time. No one aided them. Feet clattered up the steps and the door swung open with a loud bellow of "'Tenshun!" Appeared four or five officers, evidently of high rank, and clumped across the room to the office in the corner. The acting top came out at once and blew his whistle.

"Every one at the foot of their bunks as soon as the doctor is finished with them," he directed. "Blouse, campaign hats, belts and bayonets. Rifles in the hand. Showdown inspection in five minutes."

The showdown did not take a great deal of time after all. The officers went around to each bunk, checked the articles thereon, looked at each man's rifle and took themselves off. When they were gone, the first sergeant called up the stairway—

"That's all tonight, men."

Eadie swept his things into his shelter half and thrust them under the bunk.

"Better not do that," advised one of the other men. "Orders is to have your pack made up all the time. They'll nail you good for not havin' it done."

"Who ever heard of a bunch of prisoners being armed with rifles and bayonets?"

"We ain't real prisoners," answered the other. "This is just kind of a disciplinary company. The real hard eggs ain't got no rifles, nor no uniforms, neither. They live in the next block."

"Want a hand on that pack?" asked Jake Brown, who was watching Eadie's crude efforts at rolling his blankets. "My head is goin' round like a pair o' bones. Maybe rollin' a pack would help quiet it. Man, I thought that bird was shovin' a bayonet in my arm. How come you don't know how to roll a pack and you a sergeant?"

"I've always been with a mounted outfit," said Eadie, "where they don't use these fearful things. What the deuce are all these loops for? Toilet articles?"

"Naw, they're to make your haversack whatever size you want it. Put your bacon and condiment can an' razor and things in the top and just keep out your blankets. What you goin' to sleep in if you put your blankets in the roll?"

"That's right," said Eadie, "I never thought of that."

"I won't be surprized if we got sent over after all," said Brown, feeling in his pockets for a chew. "Keepin' us full pack all the time looks like it. I used up all my chewin', but I got somethin' as good if I can find it"

"We ain't goin' nowhere," spoke up one of the men on a bunk across the aisle. "We been doin' this thing for a month now and here we are. I heard we wouldn't go till we finished gradin' that baseball field, and that'll take us all summer."

"Suits me," said Brown, "I don't hanker for no ocean trip anyway. I bet I put that thing in my hat. Sure thing, there it is. Keeps it cool an' moist, puttin' it in a hatband."

From the band of his hat he extracted the end of a cigar, a piece about an inch long, and this he inserted in his mouth, where he chewed on it pleasantly. Eadie could still hear him grinding away after the lights went out and the sergeant had gone to bed.

A LIGHT shining in his eyes awakened Eadie. He rolled his face into the pillow, thinking some one returning from a pass to New York had turned on the light. He remembered

gradually that the men in these barracks were in confinement and would hardly be going to New York or anywhere else. At that moment a hand shoved him in the small of the back.

"Get up!" said a voice. "Hit the deck. Outside to shovel snow. Make up your pack and git downstairs!"

At that Eadie raised his head. The window panes were still dark, but men were sitting up in their bunks here and there, some sleepily pulling on stockings or breeches, others rubbing their touseled heads and squinting at the light, trying to dope out what it was all about. Below stairs the voice of the first sergeant could be heard, urging haste.

"What's coming off?" asked Eadie of the world in general.

"Some new —— thing to make us sorry we're soldiers," answered the man across the aisle. "They spring a new one about twice a week."

Eadie's watch informed him it was two-thirty. He and Brown helped each other to roll packs and then stumbled down the echoing stairs into the bitter cold of the morning. They found some men there already, shivering and cursing, their hands in their breeches pockets and their rifle barrels under their forearms. A stream of light blazed from the door and a rough voice called:

"Full pack 'n' overcoats. Didn't you hear me say it before? Snap out of it! Wash your ears once in a while an' you'll hear better."

Wordlessly the men went in again and put on their overcoats. They assisted each other to put on packs and went back into outer darkness once more. There was an officer there now and after the command, "Fall in," he went up and down the ranks, counting the men. The roll was called and the men counted again by the first sergeant. There was some more muttering and then—"Squads right; column right; *Huh!*" and the men tramped off. The great gates swung open and the column marched out.

Some men who had been waiting on the far side of the gate joined the column as file closers, and Eadie noticed that these men bore their rifles across their arms. He heard a dry coughing from the rear of the column and rightly judged that a motorcycle brought up the rear. Evidently the authorities feared some of the men might get lost in the darkness. They turned into the main highway of the camp, tramping stolidly along, past barrack after barrack, past row upon row of blank, staring windows, past recreation huts, dark and silent. At the corners of the streets a shadow among the shadows and something winking in the arc light showed where some lonely sentinel turned about to watch the column and made the light flash on his bayonet.

The pack weighed heavily upon Eadie's shoulders and his rifle seemed to be filled with desire to rap every skull in the company. Eadie had never carried one before. and this one was an Enfield, a model that is especially awkward. The column halted where a bar of light streamed across the road. They had come to one of the gates, and Eadie could see men coming out of the police post there and conferring with the officer with the column. The halt gave the men a chance to shift their packs to a more comfortable position and to mutter among themselves their views of the army, the march and the officer commanding.

"Where do you suppose we're going?" Eadie asked the man next to him.

"How'n —— do I know?"

"You might give a guess. I bet we're going to France."

"France ——!" cried several who had overheard. "We're goin' to Upton or Dix. They pulled an outfit out in the middle of the night like this last week an' when they woke up they was down on Long Island somewhere. We ain't goin' to France, not for much."

"Is that a fact?" asked Eadie, aghast.

"Sure'n ——," they all assured him.

The sergeant's heart began to congeal. He had ducked one outfit to become a member of another one far more distasteful. The Ninth Trench Mortar Battery had at least a chance of going overseas within the month, but if Eadie landed in one of the units of the National Army, the chances were he might spend the rest of his days learning the manual of arms.

"This is what I get," he thought, "for trying to fight the war the way I want to. A man never gets anywhere by disobeying orders. And now for a pleasant summer with the mosquitoes somewhere in Jersey."

The company tramped forward out of the camp and through the silent town. Their

guides, or guardians or escorts still accompanied them, and the motorcycle still panted from the rear of the column. A few civilians, street car men or letter carriers, hurrying to an early morning task, looked at them with little curiosity. The spectacle of marching troops was no new one in this vicinity. The company halted along some railroad tracks where more troops joined them and, after a short wait, they were ordered to climb into some dark cars. The curtains of these were down and the men were informed that any one who raised one of those curtains would regret it bitterly. So in this manner, in darkness and with drawn shades, the train began to move and to carry these men to whatever fate awaited them.

THE men sat two in a seat, and with their packs and rifles the space was rather constrained. Eadie's seatmate was uncommunicative. He sullenly rolled himself a cigaret and smoked it silently, spitting on the floor and rubbing out the spit with his foot. The sergeant rested his head on his hand and tried to sleep. In sleep one forgot one's troubles. The train jolted too much and his legs were cramped. He wished he might converse with Jake Brown, the hairy man, but the hairy man was over six feet tall and so was not in the same squad with the sergeant, for the men lined up according to height the tallest at the right. As for all the attention that was paid to Eadie's stripes, they might just as well have been sewn on his underwear. Probably every one considered him as good as busted anyway.

A train man went through the cars and lighted some dim lamps. Some of the soldiers clustered under these and tried to read scraps of newspapers they had picked up, but they did not derive much enjoyment therefrom. Eadie tried to think of the romance of it, of the exaltation of going to war and of offering one's life for one's country, but with no success. There is little romance in tramping through cold, silent streets, between rows of dark houses with people warmly asleep inside them, and one's self outside in the cold dawn. There is no room for exaltation when one is tired and sleepy and burdened with a full pack that cuts the shoulders and a rifle that weighs more than a six-inch gun.

Soldiers are but men and boys after all and can not sleep comfortably two in a day-coach seat any more than civilians can. So Eadie drowsed, and the lamps shone in his eyes and his neighbor's elbow poked him in the ribs and his neighbor's rifle fell down and barked his knees, and he was very miserable.

When daylight came he peeked out between the window edge and the curtain. The train was clattering across marshes somewhere, and nothing could be seen but a signboard or two proclaiming the excellence of some New York hotel, rates a dollar and a half a day up, and the wearing qualities of a certain brand of garter. After that Eadie looked out no more, but sat alternately trying to sleep and watching the overcoats swaying from their hooks overhead. He reflected that they would probably get no breakfast unless the Red Cross took pity on them and boarded the train somewhere with coffee and sandwiches.

About five o'clock the train came to a jarring stop and some of the men who were curious enough to peek out the door announced that the train was in a freight yard. For the better part of an hour the engine backed and pulled, shuffling up and down between long rows of silent cars as if it were doing its best to lose the passengers or cover its own trail. At last it started once more to gather speed and finally away it went, *clitter-clatter, clitter-clatter, trippety-trip,* as if the engineer had at last made up his mind where he wanted to go. A few Sister Annes looked forth again. They expressed surprize.

"Hey!" they called excitedly, "lookit! The river! We're goin' by New York!"

"Lookit the ships!" cried one, "all camel-flagged! Boy, we're goin' to Hoboken sure!"

"Sit down," growled others. "Sit down! All the railroads go by that river. That don't mean nothin'!"

"We're goin' to Hoboken all right, but we won't stop even for water!"

"Yeh, that's right," spoke up Eadie's seatmate. "The nearest we'll ever get to France will be Long Island or Seaconk or some other ash-dump like it. I ain't been in the Army all o' four months without learnin' somethin.' "

AS FOR Eadie, he resolutely tried to think of something else. He knew that if he got his heart made up to finding himself on the way to a transport, and then after a weary day on the

train he landed in some one of the many camps in New York or New Jersey, his mind would lean toward suicide. When the Sister Annes announced sadly that the train was among freight yards again, and the river lost from view, he did not even grunt. When the train slowed down and finally stopped, he paid no attention, nor did he allow his heart to give more than one bound when the car door slammed open and a deep voice cried—

"Outside!"

He went outside calmly and disinterestedly, put on his overcoat and pack and picked up his rifle. Then he looked about. The train was on a sidetrack between two long sheds, and through the sheds Eadie could see a great ship, with a gangplank down, up which a line of soldiers was rapidly passing.

"Man!" cried he to himself. "I don't believe it, I won't believe it until I get on that boat and she's at sea!"

The company lined up, the roll was called and the men counted again. There was a new first sergeant now, a fat man of about forty or so, with the chevrons of a regimental supply sergeant. There was a new officer, too, a nervous man, a captain of infantry with the ribbon of the Philipine insurrection and the Porto Rican campaign on his blouse. He looked as if he had had a long stay in hospital, and was very probably returning to go over to join some regiment that had left him behind when it went across. The men were told they might stand at ease and they unslung their packs and rolled cigarets.

"I'd like to eat," said the man next to Eadie. "See any chances?"

"No," answered the sergeant, "I don't. Maybe the Red Cross will kick in. Let's ask one of these birds with all the grey stuff on their arm; they seem to be working here."

He called to a man who wore a huge grey badge with letters of blue on it.

"Hey, guy, when do we eat?"

"On the boat," answered the man with the badge, "about twelve o'clock."

"How come," spoke several. "We ain't had no breakfast!"

"Do you know what S.O.L. means?" asked the man with the badge, hurrying away. The soldiers commented profanely.

"What's all that stuff on his arm mean?" asked the other man of Eadie.

"I don't know," answered the sergeant. "I can see N. Y. on it, probably he's a state guardsman. He looks pretty young and husky to be in the State Guard. Look, there's some Red Cross girls issuing out. I guess we eat after all."

"I see 'em," cried another man. "I wish they'd hurry. Can you see what they're puttin' out?"

"No, they got it in a basket. Maybe sandwiches."

"Let's hope they don't give it all away before they get down here."

The Red Cross girls drew nearer. They had on very keen uniforms and Eadie watched them admiringly. He wondered what kind of sandwiches they were giving out and how many each man got.

" 'Tenshun!" The line straightened. "Forward, hart!"

Away they went, past the Red Cross girl to a far part of the shed, where they perceived that they would be the next company to go aboard.

"Aw ——!" muttered every one as soon as the command "Rest" was given. "Yuh might know they'd snake us away the minute any chow got near us!"

The pangs of hunger were intense. It was nearly ten o'clock now and lack of sleep always accentuates hunger.

" 'Ray," cried Eadie suddenly. "There she is again!"

True enough, the Red Cross girl had gone to replenish her basket and was hurrying toward them.

"Man, ain't she the darb," exclaimed every one, licking his lips.

The girl drew nearer down the line, giving every one a cheery word and a smile. She extended her basket toward Eadie and he thrust forth an eager hand. The basket was full of chewing gum.

The silent, dejected company moved forward step by step. The head of the company was very near the gangway now. The Red Cross girl went swinging across the pier to replenish her basket again.

"Some coffee on the way up," she called cheerfully. "We'll give you some nice hot coffee in a minute."

The men plucked up heart at that. Things weren't so bad after all. And chewing gum had its uses, too. They began to get their cups out of their canteen carriers. The head of the company reached the gangway and began to go aboard. Eadie saw Jake Brown's great form clamber up the

gangplank and disappear behind the bulwarks. A sad thought occurred to him. The line moved forward swiftly now. Eadie looked about for signs of the coffee, but saw none. He even stepped out of ranks a bit to see down the pier. This secured him nothing but a growl from the officer and another from a big M. P. who was twirling his club a few feet away. Eadie found himself at the foot of the gangplank undergoing a sharp scrutiny from a naval officer and the fat sergeant.

"Name?" asked the fat sergeant.

"Eadie."

"Eadie," repeated the fat sergeant, making a mark on his list.

"Eadie," muttered a sailor on the other side of the gangplank, with a similar list.

Another sailor handed Eadie a slip of paper and Eadie mounted the gangplank. Another sailor at the top looked at the slip and directed the sergeant to go below and turn to the right, after that to make further inquiries. Eadie went below and to the right. Another inspection of his ticket.

"Down that next ladder," directed the sailor.

Eadie went down. It was dark here and it stank.

"Hey, sailor," called the sergeant, "where shall I throw this pack? Anywhere?"

"Nope," said the sailor, "lemme see your ticket. Every man's got a ticket with his bunk and boat station on it, an' if you get into somebody else's bunk, there'd be —— to pay. Huh, compartment G Four. Down that ladder."

"Down that ladder? For the luvva Mike, how far down do these ladders go?"

"Quite a ways yet. Why, this deck we're on is the troops' promenade deck."

"Is that so!" muttered Eadie, and descended the next ladder.

There were no more ladders in sight when he reached the bottom. Just darkness and red steel walls and bunks, four tiers deep. There was a half-hearted electric light way off behind some bunks and voices came from that direction, but where Eadie was the compartment was deserted.

"What's your bunk number, soldier?" asked a voice. Still another sailor. He inspected Eadie's ticket by the aid of a flashlight. "Eight four," he said. "Right here, that second one."

"That's not so bad," answered Eadie. "I expected I'd have to have that top one."

"That's a good bunk," said the sailor. "A guy that's in one of them hurricane bunks don't get no lunch spilled on him when we get to sea."

"What do you mean, lunch spilled on him?"

"You'll see," said the sailor meaningly. "It gets kind of choppy on the way over this season of the year."

"Well, condemn my eyes!" exclaimed the sergeant.

Then he cast his overcoat and pack into the bunk, laid his rifle atop and turned to go up the stairs again. A scraping sound made him turn his head. Some one was coming down the aisle, brushing the bunks on either hand with his body.

"Hyyuh!" called a voice.

That bulk could belong to but one man. It was Hairy Jake.

"Hullo," cried Eadie. "They got you in this subcellar too?"

"Yup," said Jake, "way over the other side. We must be kinda near the bottom here. Nice to get out if a submarine hits us."

SUBMARINE! Eadie felt a distinct chill about his heart. That thought had never occurred to him. It *would* be a long journey up all those ladders and if some green ocean water were coming down it might be an impossible one.

"Let's go on deck," said Eadie. "It's kind of close down here."

"C'm on," said Jake, and they went up the ladder.

The sunlight was warm upon the decks. The press of soldiers was very great, so that one had to move sidewise through the crowd and draw in one's stomach to let others by. Eadie and Jake finally found themselves at the ship's side, where they could see down into the pier.

"I knew it," exclaimed Eadie, "look at that!"

A man in a white apron shoved a tiny cart, in which was a coffee urn and a big basket of sandwiches. Two girls in those mean gray uniforms walked beside the cart, issuing out the coffee and sandwiches.

"An' we missed it!" exclaimed Jake, beating the rail with his hairy fists. "Now ain't that distilled ——! My stomach's emptier than a shavetail's head!"

Eadie's company were all aboard and it was another outfit that was getting the

coffee, an infantry outfit for they all wore blue hat cords. As one of the men came aboard, Eadie hailed him enviously.

"How's the coffee?"

"Pretty good," answered the man, boosting his pack around so that he could get through the narrow lane the soldiers left open to the hatchway.

"What's in them sandwiches?" asked Jake, licking his lips.

"I dunno," said the man, "we had a big breakfast 'fore we left camp and I didn't have no taste for no more food. I didn't wish for no sandwiches, so I don't know what they're made out of. Peanut butter, most like."

Then he disappeared down the ladder. Eadie and Jake rested their hands upon the rail without words. It would be a long time until dinner.

The two soldiers leaned over the rail for a long time. The last of the infantry came aboard and the sailors with much shouting hauled in the gangplank. The two were not even mildly interested. A long blast of the whistle startled them and Jake began to hunt for eating tobacco. The roof of the pier began to slide forward.

"Hey!" cried Eadie.

It was not the pier but the ship that moved.

"Boy," announced Jake, "we didn't git here none too soon. A little later an' we'd have missed the boat."

Eadie felt no elation at the ship's departure. Perhaps he was too tired. He did have a feeling of contentment. He was on his way to France at last, and nothing could prevent his arrival at the seat of war except the declaration of peace, a thing that at that time seemed very doubtful. Eadie was so sickened by the drool that the newspapers were handing the public that he never read one, but his last information of the progress of the war was that the Germans were going through the Allies like stampeding horses through a row of pup tents.

The ship slid out into the stream, three big tugs holding her stern against the set of the tide, and then, pivoting about, hesitated a minute and began to move majestically down the harbor. Some one began to bellow. "Troops below!" and the soldiers clattered down the ladders.

"Do you crave to go down into that hole?" asked Jake.

"No," said Eadie, "but what else can I do?"

"Stick with me, kid, and you'll wear diamonds. Come here!"

Jake led the way over a hatch, ducked around a winch, and there were six or seven soldiers in their shirts, peeling spuds.

"We belong to this detail," said Jake. "Slip us a knife. Take off your blouse, sergeant, so's they can't see your stripes, and let's go."

"What's all this get us?" asked Eadie, reaching into the pail for a spud and beginning to remove its outer covering.

"We get a nice sail down the harbor an' all the sights free of charge and furthermore—" Jake nudged Eadie slyly with his elbow—"we gets to eat with the K. P. all we want, an' no questions asked."

IN THE lower harbor they cast anchor and waited through the afternoon while five more ships, daubed and streaked with paint like Indian warriors, came down and joined them. At nightfall the ships hoisted anchor and steamed out to sea. The troops were allowed on deck now, and they came up thankfully, raging about close quarters and shuttered portholes. Eadie and Jake had eaten dinner with the K.P., and now that supper was about to be served, began to have their doubts as to the sharpness of their appetites. The ship climbed and rolled and bowed and wabbled about very unsteadily. The North Atlantic swell heaved itself up from the bed of the ocean and made havoc with ships and stomachs.

"Shall we eat, or shan't we?" asked Eadie.

"Better eat," advised Jake. "Better eat an' then we wont be hungry. One o' them sailors told me to eat hearty an' I wouldn't mind seasickness so much. He says the worst part of it is tryin' to pump a empty stomach dry."

"Well, we'll eat then."

They crept cautiously down a ladder—those ladders weren't so easy to run up and down now—and sliding about on the steel deck, waited their turn to be served. The food for the men in the forward part of the ship was served under the hatch, the tables being spread about in a horseshoe formation. Against the side of the compartment were wooden tanks full of sea water, having steam led into them, to heat them, and in

these the men could wash their messkits.

"This isn't bad," said Eadie after he had been served. "We only stood in line about ten minutes. And here's good hot water to wash our mess kits in. If there's anything I hate, it's trying to clean a messkit in cold soup."

"Right," agreed Jake. "I mind when I was with my outfit that by the time half the company had washed messkits, there'd be a crust of grease round the side o' the boiler a half inch thick."

Eadie felt his stomach go after that. The words "grease" did for him. He went up the ladder without further parley. A sailor, leaning over the rail and smoking an aftersupper pipe, consoled with him.

"Stay in the open air, soldier, an' you'll be all right. Stay topside if it kills yuh. It ain't the sea gets a man; it's the rotten air in them compartments."

The sailor gazed to seaward and puffed at his pipe. The breeze pulled at the collar of his jumper and blew ashes from his pipe.

"What we got for company this time?" he inquired of no one. "If there's any old camels wors'n this one, I'd like to know it. Git rid of it, soldier, you're doin' fine. Play you was drunk last night and you won't mind it so much. Enjoy yourself now, 'cause tomorrow they won't let you hang your head over the rail. Can't break no swill over the side, no ashes, no cigaret butts, no nothin'. A sub can chase a ship across the Atlantic by the cigaret butts the troops throw overboard."

The sailor let the smoke from his pipe blow in Eadie's direction. That pipe could stand alone, and in addition it was filled with good old pigtail twist, black and powerful.

"Heave ho!" comforted the sailor.

After a while Jake came up and, having asked for and received a chew from the sailor, sat down on the deck beside the white and shaken sergeant.

"Feel better?" asked Jake.

The sergeant nodded.

"Let's take a walk," suggested Jake. "It'll clear your head."

The sergeant got to his feet and, clinging tightly to the rail, groped his way toward the ladder. After a while he felt better and Jake assisted him to climb to the upper deck where it was breezier and a man might recover in better fashion.

The ship was a converted liner, as most transports were. The need for immediate transportation of American troops to France was very great and anything that could float had been pressed into service. There were some weird ships with weirder crews that carried troops overseas. It was a lucky man that went in an American ship with good old American gobs sailing it. The British boats with their diet of cheese and tea were heartily cursed. There were some others, manned by mixed crews of all nationalities, feeding the troops on garbage that a pig would refuse, but getting them to France just the same. It is a pity official visitors to the battlefields couldn't go on a boat like that.

The room that had formerly been the first cabin lounge on Eadie's ship was now used as the ship's office, filled with paymasters' clerks, yeomen and miscellaneous. The smoking room had shed its paneled wall coverings and was a sick bay, with an operating room in the old bar. The promenade-deck cabins were allotted to the ship's officers, the cabins on the lower deck were given to troop officers, and the soldiers slept in the cargo space. The best troop space was in the old dining-room, but this had been allotted by the commanding officer of the troops on board to his own outfit, a coast artillery company that were going over to be anti-aircraft gunners. As for the casual companies, of which there were two, Eadie's and another, they slept in the lower hold, and were supposed to be thankful that they had any bunks at all.

By the time the two soldiers had made a survey of the ship, Eadie had recovered his peace of mind once more. They went forward to the forecastle head and, hanging to their hats, climbed the ladders.

"——'s bells!" cried Jake, leaning against the breeze. "It blows fit to take the fillin's out of a man's teeth here."

EADIE turned his back to the wind and looked about the sea. If any land was in sight astern it was too dark to see it. There were four more ships in the convoy, two to starboard and one to port, and one wallowing astern, displaying a great high bow when she rose on a sea and giving a birdseye view of her superstructure when she plunged. All the ships were wrapped in darkness, great lumps in the black night, slipping quietly through the seas like blind lost creatures.

Eadie felt that it was a foolish thing to go out so boldly into the darkness of these black waters. Suppose the enemy was abroad? True, this was a long way from Germany, but submarines had crossed the Atlantic before. He would have spoken to Jake about it, but he had to shout to make himself heard, and he did not care to cry aloud such alarming thoughts. He looked aft again, up at the great funnel, and saw against the sky the heads of the men on the bridge, just visible over the canvas dodger, several heads, moving back and forth. There was vigilance there, certainly.

In the well just under the forecastle were two great guns, and Eadie could see a sailor in a pea jacket standing near each. Ahead was a low dim vessel, just a suspicion of something on the surface of the water, her position marked by a dim blue light at the stern. Smoke from her stacks drifted down wind, and the hurrying seas leaped at her gun ports and washed out again with gleaming foam. Eadie nudged Jake and pointed. Jake nodded. He could see her, too. The convoy was not so lonely after all. Eadie finally turned to go down and Jake followed him. At the foot of the ladder Jake yawned tremendously.

"Hum!" he cried, "I ain't had any sleep! I think it's about time to do a little bunk police. I can't keep my eyelids apart much longer."

"Do you think we can sleep in that cellar?" asked Eadie.

"Man, I could sleep in a refrigerator," declared Jake.

The two clambered down the ladders to their compartment. There were lights on now, and throngs of soldiers in all stages of undress sat about on the deck, reclined in their bunks or clustered in a circle around games of black jack. Also one could hear grunts and pleas for a "six" or a "three 'n two."

"Two bits he comes!" grinned Jake.

The temperature kept pace with the two soldiers. The lower they went, the chillier it grew. By the time they had reached their own compartment the air was damp and cold and very uncomfortable. It was early Spring and the North Atlantic is quite chill at that season, for the Spring ice from Greenland has but lately been changed to sea water off the Newfoundland capes.

It was not so long ago that a great ship ripped her bottom out on an iceberg and many died in the icy water before they had time to drown. The compartment where Eadie and Jake slept was below the water line and with the cold sea not many inches away, the air in that compartment was a bit frigid.

"Did you say something about a refrigerator?" asked Eadie.

"I did," answered Jake, "but I didn't mean you to take me up on it so quick."

The men in that compartment were lying down wrapped in their overcoats, many of them still wearing their hats. The dull throb of the screws was clearly audible here, even above the many squeaks and groans and small talk of a ship in a moderate seaway. Eadie looked sadly at his bunk, a piece of canvas stretched between two rods, supported on wooden uprights. There were two bunks over him and one beneath, all occupied. What was it that sailor had said about spilled lunch?

"I must be goin'," said Jake. "See yuh in the morning."

He went off into the tangle of bunk uprights, and Eadie began half-heartedly to undo his pack and get at his blankets.

"I don't like this place," muttered Eadie.

He sniffed. The cold air was becoming a little ripe. There were many men in that compartment and in addition to using up the oxygen, they were discharging odors from dirty hides and clothes long unwashed. They had been prisoners for varying lengths of time and their physical well being had not been looked after very carefully. The smell was not strong, but still noticeable. It was not yet nine o'clock.

"What will this place be like tomorrow morning?" Eadie asked himself, "and what will it be ten days from now? I'm going to find myself another bunk. There must be some place on this ship where a man can stretch out."

He put on his overcoat and climbed up the ladder again. As he reached the deck above, the lights went out, all except a dim blue one at the head of each ladder. The blackness was like a solid wall, but from the obscurity came voices whispering, soft snores, the crash of a hobnail falling to the deck, rattling of bunk rods as some uneasy sleeper tossed about and always the cheeping, twittering, shaking noises of the ship and the swift mysterious silky rustling of the ocean hurrying along the side.

THE Great Adventure at last. To France, to battle, and to glory. The ancestors of these men had gone out across the Western plains to a new land, and had lined the way with their bones. They had gone out by scores and hundreds, done battle with the red men, defeated him and left a glorious tradition behind them for the encouragement of weaker generations. Now these boys went themselves on the path of glory, but they went by the thousands. They left their families and friends behind and were friendless and alone in the midst of multitudes. And their enemy did not come upon them with bow and arrow, and slow-firing muzzle-loading rifle, but with the most scientific of modern weapons, nor did he show himself when he struck, nor fight as becomes a man, but approached silently with stealth, hidden under the waters, and having struck, darted away and left the hungry ocean to finish the work he had begun.

"And now," concluded Eadie to himself, "let's see if I can find somewhere to sleep."

He found his way with some difficulty to the upper deck and passed a sentry at the head of the last ladder. This ladder opened into an alleyway that ran from the forward well deck to the well deck aft. Eadie explored it. The galleys, storerooms and the fire-room entrances opened off this passage, so that it would probably be a well-traveled way. There would be no place to sleep there. Eadie remembered that there was an open space under the poop, a small place about a stairway that went down to the next deck. This was probably the old second-class social hall. Anyway, there was room there and to spare and Eadie could wrap himself in his overcoat and lie down. If he found the place suitable, he could bring up his blankets later. He hurried through the alleyway and, crossing the well deck, went under the poop. It was dark in there and as Eadie stepped over the weatherboard, he felt something soft beneath his feet.

"Ow! Whyin—— don'tcha look where ye'r' goin'?" muttered a sleepy voice.

Eadie stepped quickly to one side and, tripping, brought up with both knees in some one's stomach. The man beneath his knees groaned heavily. The sergeant frantically tried to clamber to his feet, put his hand in somebody's mouth, received a strong shove from behind, heard the swish of a swinging fist go by his ear, and finally fled, panic stricken, across billowing bodies to the door again.

"I might have known," he informed himself, panting, "that every soldier on the boat would see that place and make for it. Boy! It's a wonder I didn't get killed!"

Feet tramped across the deck, and the dark forms of several men loomed against the sky. There was a crash of steel butt plates on the steel deck, and the men sighed and shuffled their feet. "Relief fall out," some one said gruffly, and the men made for the door under the poop. There was protest from within, queries as to how many guys were coming through that condemned door, pleas for quiet and requests to shove to —— over and let a man lie down.

"One soldier, one bunk. Histe yourself."

In a little while there was quiet. A man came out and leaned over the rail his bayonet scabbard clicking on the bulwark.

"I'll bet," thought Eadie, "that that's where the guard hangs out. Yessir, that's the very place! It's lucky I didn't find a place to lie down; I might have been turned out and made to walk a post all night. Well, this isn't getting me any nearer bed. Let's try the other alley."

The other alley yielded no better results. There were staterooms there, door after silent door. No niche or corner where a man might lie down. Eadie felt his way along, one hand on the panels. It was black as a wolf's throat in that alley. When he paused to get his bearings from time to time he could hear breathing and the inevitable snores. The staterooms were all occupied. The unattached troop officers slept there, quartermaster lieutenants for the most part, going over to take up the burden of paper work in some of the base ports.

Ah! An alley leading off the main passage. Where did it go? Eadie would discover. He felt his way down the right-hand side. There was nothing but paneling as far as the ship's skin, where there was a door. This door was in two halves, with a shelf on the lower. Probably the library, or the canteen, or something like that. It would not be used during the night. On the other side, paneling, clear to the main passage again, where there was another door.

"Now," decided Eadie, "the lower edge of this place won't be traveled after dark.

No one is going to that library or whatever it is when the lights are out. As for this other door, it's near enough to the main alleyway so that no one will see me if I'm at the other end of this one."

HE REMOVED his overcoat and sat on the sill of the door near the main passage to remove his puttees and shoes. The sills of these staterooms were about a foot high, to keep out any water that might sneak in from the deck. Eadie pulled upon a shoe with vigor. It came off suddenly and he went backward. The panels of the door yielded easily and he reclined upon the back of his neck in the stateroom, to the accompaniment of a tremendous crash.

"Pardon me!" he exclaimed to the darkness. "I'm sorry."

He scrambled to his feet expecting to hear muttered questions and he had a lively apprehension lest some nervous officer start to probe the darkness with lead from a forty-five. The room was silent. There was no bubbling sound of breath, no smell of men. The air was warm, it had an odor of clean paint, of salt water, and of plush. Eadie stamped his shod foot on the deck. No response.

"If this isn't an empty stateroom," cried Eadie, "then I'm a cook's police in a pill battery."

He groped toward the wall and his hand immediately found a water-proof light switch. First making sure that the door was closed, he turned the switch. Nothing happened. The lights were all turned off at the main switchboard, to prevent any absent-minded officer or man turning a switch and sending a beam of light across the sea that could be seen for eighty miles or so.

Eadie grunted and felt along the wall with his hand. Two bunks. Both empty, with nothing therein but mattresses. Two more on the next wall, likewise empty. A plush couch, and a cold steel wall that must be the ship's side. A wash-stand in the corner, nothing more back to the door again.

"Oh, boy," exclaimed Eadie. "I think I've fallen into something soft!"

He explored the door again. The key was in the lock.

"I'll say I have. It's warm enough in here so we don't need any blankets and we can dust out the minute reveille blows. But what's to prevent our hanging out in here all day? Nothing. Soft. There'll be lights on during the day and we can read and live the life of Riley. I must go down and get Hairy Jake."

As he went to the door he paused.

"By gosh," he decided, "I never could find him in all that mixup. I don't even know where he bunks. And what would I tell him? He wouldn't get out of a bunk and follow me just because I dragged at his arm. And if I told him about this place, the whole compartment would want to come. Nope. It's tough on Jake, but he's got to wait until morning. I'd better try it out alone, anyway, because if some one should come in here during the night and sling me out on my ear it won't be as bad as if both of us got thrown out. Nope, Jake, *mañana* you can have a bunk in this stateroom, but not tonight."

The sergeant reached out into the passage for his overcoat, secured it, locked the door, and having selected the bunk that felt the most comfortable, lay down upon it, and after a little time of marveling at his good fortune, he slept.

IN THE morning the chow line was much larger than it had been the day before. It was a fine sparkling day, a strong breeze driving the spray across the decks, and the ships dancing and curtseying like fat old dowagers in their second childhood. Appetites are good on such a morning at sea. Eadie would have sought Jake at once, but stomach first is one of the best of the unwritten army regulations. Bacon, boiled eggs and fried potatoes having been consumed and seconds tried for without success, the sergeant went in search of Jake. First he inspected his own bunk, folded the blankets in regulation manner and made all snug, so that any inspector would not know the bunk had an occupant during the night. Then he sought among the bunks for Jake.

"Where's Jake Brown's bunk?" he asked a man who read a paper novel under a light in the deck above.

"Who in ——'s Jake Brown?" asked the man.

"The big hairy guy," said Eadie.

"Oh, that big guy? I don't know where he sleeps. Over back there with the rest of the elephants."

Eadie went in the indicated direction.

There was a game of stud in progress under another light. The cards had all been dealt and "king-jack" was betting. Each man in turn wet his lips a bit, took a look at his hole card, looked at the king-jack, looked at his pile of matches, took another look at the hole card, and wrinkled his brows. Some stayed and some turned their cards over. It would not be wise to seek information from those men. The sergeant went down the next row of bunks, where a man sat on the lowest tier and wiped his mess-kit with a towel. When he had carefully put the knife, fork and spoon inside, snapped on the cover and stowed the kit in his haversack, Eadie addressed him.

"Do you know where a big hairy guy named Jake Brown sleeps?"

"Yeah, sure, he sleeps over me in this bunk right here." The man punched the bunk over him. "I never could figure out," he continued, "why they put a big guy like that in a upper bunk. If that canvas was the least bit weak, he'd come through an' iron me right out."

"Where do you suppose he's gone?" asked Eadie.

"Why, he left here jingling a cup and shavin' brush. I don't know where he'd go to shave, that I don't. He didn't have no razor that I saw. Maybe he'll get some water and come back here. That's what I do."

At this moment the one in question appeared, his shirt tucked in at the neck and a basin of water held gingerly in his hand.

"Hi, sergeant," he cried. "Man, there's such a fightin' mob in that place you couldn't get near a faucet. A sailor lent me this here basin. I had a idea it would be like that, so I left my razor here anyway. There's no place there to set up a mirror even."

He put the basin down, cautioning the men not to put their feet in it, and propped a steel mirror against a mess-cup, just where the rays from the light would be reflected from it. Then he moistened his face with the water and proceeded to rub soap on it from a stick.

Eadie tapped his toe idly on the deck and thought of his fine stateroom and how he would feel if he led Jake up there and found it full of officers.

Jake was still rubbing soap. The man in the lower bunk began to write in a diary. Jake grunted and took up his shaving brush. Eadie could hear the brush sloshing about with quick strokes. The sergeant reflected that Jake must have a beard like so many iron spikes. The brush still splattered and Jake breathed heavily. He picked up the soap and examined it, inspected the brush, and fell to earnestly once more, staring intently into the mirror.

Eadie began to notice that something was wrong. Jake worked madly at the brush, then he would seize the soap and rub it on his face as hard as he could, then make play with the brush once more.

"What the —— is the matter?" he cried suddenly. "This —— soap is spoiled or something. I can't git no lather out of it. If I keep on this way long enough, I'll grind all the hairs off."

"Maybe it's because the water's cold," suggested Eadie.

"That don't make no difference. There was a advertisement of the soap with a pictchure on to it. One guy all poobed and one guy with his face all soap a foot deep. The soapy face guy says to the poobed guy, 'I don't have to have hot water any more to shave, buddy, cold water is good enough for me. I use McGluke's shaving stick. Hot or cold, it lathers just the same.' So I bought some. It always worked with cold water before."

"Maybe you didn't rub on enough."

"Huh! I wore about a inch off that stick, an' I ain't got soap enough on my face to make a louse blink if it was all in his eye."

"Well, I'm condemned," remarked Eadie. "I don't know what's the matter with it. Maybe it's the sea air. Did it soften your beard any?"

Jake made a tentative sweep with the razor and gave a howl that made the compartment ring like a bell.

"No," he cried profanely, "it didn't."

The man in the lower bunk stood up after the echoes of Jake's outcry had died away, and when the other men had ceased to inquire who was being murdered—

"What's eatin' yuh?" he asked.

Jake explained that though there was soap, there was no lather and that he desired to shave.

"What yuh got in that basin?" queried the man. "Salt water?"

"By ——!" cried Jake, and sniffed at the basin. "So 'tis. Would that make any difference?"

The other man went back to his diary in disgust.

"Where was you brought up?" he inquired. "'Course salt water won't make no lather."

Jake looked at Eadie for confirmation or denial.

"Can't prove it by me," said Eadie. "I don't know."

"Well, how in —— will I shave?" asked Jake helplessly.

"I guess you'll have to grow a beard," grinned the sergeant.

"Well, I'm ——," muttered Jake. "I hope this water will wash what soap I got on off. Then I'll dump that water and crown the flatfoot that give me that basin. He knew —— well that water wouldn't melt soap."

"I'll see you on deck," said Eadie. "I want to show you something."

He caught Jake's eye and let one eyelid flicker, at the same time making a slight sign for silence, nodding toward the man in the lower bunk. Jake gave an understanding grimace and went off with the basin in one hand and his blouse over his arm.

EADIE went up to the deck and stood near a pile of life rafts. Every available bit of deck space was taken up, and the hatches were completely ringed by soldiers who had their backs against the coaming. The air was quite chill and the sunshine was very welcome. More sat on the pile of rafts and dangled their feet. The ladders were full of men in olive drab, who had to stand up and swing over the deck to allow people to pass up and down. A solid line hung over the bulwarks.

"Talk about your subway rush hours," thought Eadie. "How is it going to seem to go all the way to France standing up, without even a strap to hold to?"

Jake came bursting through the starboard door and looked wildly around until he saw Eadie. Eadie went down to him hurriedly, and again motioning for silence, led the way back into the alleyway and along its dim aisle. He peered around the corner of the side passage, to be sure the library or whatever it was, was not open. Then he motioned for Jake to come up beside him. Jake came, anticipation bursting from him. Eadie took the other's hand and ducking around the corner, fitted the key to the stateroom lock and opened the door. He swung the door gently shut, found the switch and turned it on. A glow of light revealed the warm stateroom in all its comfort and luxury. Eadie looked at Jake to register wonder and approval, but Jake's eyes were fixed earnestly upon Eadie and his hurrying tongue moistened his lips.

"What is it?" whispered Jake hoarsely. "Yuh gotta pint?"

"No," said Eadie disgustedly. "I haven't got any pint, you big skull. Look at this swell stateroom I found."

"Ugh," grunted Jake, "if yuh get caught in here they'll hang yuh."

He looked about him with obvious disappointment, but this gradually disappeared as the full effect of the mattressed bunks, the warmth and the brightness of the lights was borne upon him. When he discovered the washstand in the corner he grinned.

"I bet there's fresh water there," he exclaimed, and went over to explore the cabinet beneath the stand.

"Yep," he cried triumphantly, "a big pitcher full. It ought to last us all the way to France if we use it right."

He straightened up and surveyed the stateroom again.

"How'd yuh find this place?" he inquired.

Eadie explained and pointed out that since it had not been slept in by any one except himself, and because there was no baggage under the bunks, it must be an extra room, and that nothing stood in the way of its being annexed by the two of them.

"They can't do any more than kick us out if they catch us," concluded Eadie.

Jake idly scuffed at the floor with his shoe.

"We can't shoot no crap here," he decided, "the floor slants too much."

"Well I'll be condemned!" cried Eadie. "When you go to heaven I bet you'll kick because the gold streets are hard on the feet."

"That's a —— of a swear you got," answered Jake. "'I'll be condemned.' What'd you do, sign the pledge or something?"

"No," said Eadie, "but I was brought up in a Scotch household, you bet your life,

even if my old man is the sixth generation in this country, And I had hell served up on the table with my meals, so I don't like to mention it. Strict stuff, Jake. I'm not kidding you. Church three times a day on Sunday and prayer-meeting once a week, and grace said for every meal. Twenty-one years of that give a man some good habits."

"Do you drink?" asked Jake, grinning.

"Huh!" grunted Eadie.

"Well, that's wors'n swearing, isn't it?"

"Look, Jake, there's ten commandments about all sorts of things, among which is one that says something about not swearing. Well there's nothing there about not taking a drink for the sake of one's liver once in a while. I'll tell you though, Jake, I'm careful who I drink with. Some men just get merry and full of song and want to hang around some one's neck, and others get mean and sullen, and all the bad that's in them comes right to the surface. There's a lot of things can be said in praise of liquor and one is that if you want to really know a guy, if you want to really see what kind of a man he is, go out and get all torched up with him. Well, I haven't had anything since I was in the Army, except down in Shelby when I'd just come out of the hospital. A civilian invited me to supper at a hotel and he offered me a drink out of a flask he had. And as long as he paid for my supper I didn't want to refuse. Boy, that was powerful stuff. One shot on my poor weak stomach did for me. I got right up on the table and offered to lick any one in the place. I bet that guy won't be so free offering drinks to soldiers any more."

"Well, as fer me," said Jake, removing his blouse and leaping into a bunk, "I can swear to make the hair on your neck curl."

And to prove it he said a yard or so of words that bid fair to raise blisters on the paintwork.

"You tell 'em, Jake," said Eadie. "I'm tongue-tied. While we're waiting for dinner, I guess I'll shave. We'd better leave our stuff down there, except our overcoats, because it's so warm here we don't need our blankets. And as long as our stuff is on the bunk, we won't have anyone chasing around looking for us."

That afternoon Jake and Eadie spent in luxurious sleep. The food was good and they ate heartily of it. When the library opened, they secured books and read. After supper they sought the deck, watched the sunset, smoked a little, and back to their stateroom again. In this manner they killed the first four or five days at sea.

ON THE evening of the sixth day they sat dangling their feet from the pile of life rafts, when there was a great clattering of feet on the deck above and quite a crowd pushed down the ladder, headed by the social worker who kept the library and whose duty it was to issue writing paper and keep the soldiers cheerful. He was a gray-haired man undoubtedly a country minister, a well-meaning man enough, but hardly one to mingle with rough soldiery. His touch with the world, if he had ever had any, had been lost for some time. His chief idea of recreation was to go up to two soldiers who were talking together and, shoving boxing gloves into their hands, implore them to fight each other. This is one way to become unpopular.

This social worker, then, appeared with his inevitable boxing gloves. Behind him, flanked by an officer and a sergeant, was a man in professional fighting togs, trunks, ring shoes, broken nose and cauliflower ear.

"That's the guy," said Eadie, "that's been boxing every night with that coast artillery outfit aft. They probably brought him up here looking for fresh meat."

This seemed to be true. Cosmoline slingers poured down both ladders and hung over the rail from the promenade deck. The social worker led his prize into the center of the well deck, where he mounted the hatch and announced that Jess Willard the Second was aboard the ship and declared himself champion thereof, over sailors and soldiers. After this announcement the social worker smiled upon all. The alleged champion stood with folded arms and calm countenance.

"Any one like to take a chance," smiled the announcer. "Come, just a little fun, boys."

The boys did not seem eager to step up and be hammered by this bruiser just to please the social worker. There was some excitement at the suggestion that the sailors' champion appear but after a period of hunting, and a few attempts on the part of the sporting men in the crowd to place bets, it appeared that the sailor champion

was on watch and that he would therefore be unable to appear. The social worker had an inspiration. His roving eye caught sight of Jake's great form on the rafts. With one leap he was down off the hatch and shoving his pair of boxing gloves into Jake's hands.

"Here's a man will go a round or two, won't you? I know you will! Come right down, let me help you off with your coat!"

The spectators howled vigorously. They were only too eager to see some one else fed to the lions.

"Go on!" they cheered. "Polish him off, big boy, hang one on his eye."

Jake got down from the rafts, protesting.

"I don't know how to fight," said he. "Let some one else do it."

The social worker was already hauling at his blouse, and one or two coast artillerymen were assisting, one removing Jake's hat and the other tugging at his sleeves.

"Here," cried Eadie, leaping down himself. "Let go of him. If he wants to fight, all right; if he doesn't, you aren't going to make him."

"Who the —— are you?" demanded one of the cosmoline slingers.

Eadie smote him swiftly between nose and lip, drawing claret from both.

"Wow!" howled every one.

Two cosmoliners leaped upon Eadie, but one of them nearly had his neck broken by a sailor seizing him by the collar of his blouse and dragging him backward. The other one met a set of knuckles thrown by one of Eadie's own company and for a minute things looked promising.

"Gawn back to your own part o' the ship," cried several. "Gawn, yuh anti-aircraft ——, don't come up here tryin' to run no sandy!"

The social worker stood smiling vacuously. Five days of inaction and a hearty meat diet will do strange things with a bunch of soldiers. Then from his post on the hatch the haughty pugilist spoke.

"Step up, big boy," he invited, "I won't hurt you."

"I'll have a go with him," announced Jake, "only don't put no pillows on my hands."

This announcement headed off the incipient riot and a ring was promptly formed. It was explained to Jake that the gloves were for the protection of his own hands and not for the softening of his blows. He allowed Eadie and a number of self-appointed seconds to remove his shirt and lace his gloves for him. There was a running fire of comment from the onlookers regarding the amount of hair on Jake's chest, the probable length of time he would stand up to the champion and the probability of his further disarranging the champion's features.

"Shake hands," cried the social worker, who had elected himself referee.

A big C. P. O.—chief petty officer—held the clock and the two men stepped forward.

"Shake hands," said the social worker again, and the pug extended his glove.

Jake also extended his rather awakwardly, and with a foolish grin on his face. The pug lightly touched Jake's glove, and seemed to sink a little on his legs. Sock! Swifter than the eye might follow, the pug shot over a sickle-like blow that spread Jake in the starboard waterway.

"Wow!" howled the coast artillerymen.

There was considerable growling from the sailors and the men of the two casual companies.

"Lay off the wise stuff," they advised the prancing champion, "this ain't no prize fight! Give the guy a show."

Eadie looked at Jake, expecting him to rise slowly and dazedly, but Jake got quite calmly to his feet and walked with steady pace to the center of the ring again.

"That's a —— of a way to shake hands," he said.

The battle began. The pug drummed on Jake's ribs, made a wild swing or two that missed, and the C. P. O. bellowed—

"Time!"

"How many rounds o' this comedy?" asked the pug.

"How many rounds, boys?" asked the referee.

"To a finish, to a finish," howled all the coast artillerymen.

"Three rounds," growled the sailors. "Three rounds. What the —— d'yuh think this is? Three rounds is enough."

"All right," agreed the social worker. "Three rounds it is. Ready again boys?"

"Now keep your shirt on," said the C. P. O. "I'm holdin' the clock here. I'll give the word for time."

Shortly he gave it. The pug danced

madly about, and hammered Jake unmercifully. They clinched and the pug's fist drummed on Jake's kidneys. Throughout it all Jake maintained the same attitude—foot outstretched, left arm advanced, right arm drawn back beside his ear. He struck no blows, only fended off a hook or a swing occasionally with his left arm.

"This ain't no fight," said some of the sailors. "This guy's a walkin' punchin' bag."

The coast artillery howled for a knockout and the pug did his best to oblige, but it is quite a stunt to knock a man out in three rounds.

"Time!" roared the C. P. O.

"Stay with him, kid," pleaded Eadie in Jake's ear, while he waved a shirt up and down to drive the air into Jake's lungs. "Only one more round, kid. Watch out for those haymakers. Don't let him rush you to the rail. Stay with 'em, kid!"

Jake looked fixedly at the sergeant for the space of a second. Then one eyelid slowly rose and fell. Other than this sign, Jake was mute.

"Time!"

The referee danced forward, smiling.

"Shake hands, boys," he said. "Last round, fellows. Shake hands!"

Splush! A solemn sound. A sound as of one who shakes a trowel full of mortar into a tub.

"Man!" cried Eadie. "What was that?"

There was a moment of silence while a man might breathe once. Then the sailors and the casuals gave voice.

"Wow! Ya-a-a-ay! Oh kid!"

There was a turmoil of consternation from the coast artillery. Eadie had not been watching, there being little joy in seeing his buddy hammered about the deck, but now he shoved to a point of vantage. Jake was calmly trying to pull off his gloves, while some distance from him, under a winch, was the limp black figure of the pugilist.

"Git up," urged several, "git up and take it!"

"Count him out, yuh —— dummy!" cried many to the gaping referee.

"What happened? What happened?"

A coast artilleryman called "Foul!" His comrades raised the word to a roar.

"Foul!" they bellowed. "Foul! The big guy fouled him!"

WHO can say how such things begin? Too much meat is the real genesis of riot. Fifty fights started at once, howls of rage mounted to the sky, then subsided into heavy grunting, for the American is a silent fighter. Each man seemingly smote the one nearest him and joy was unconfined. In the midst of the swirling, twisting throng, Jake Brown pleaded for some one to remove his pillows, but it was of no avail. The others had too much on their minds.

Eadie still held Jake's shirt in his hand and when the fight started he was at the rail, where he had placed his own and Jake's blouses. His first intimation of battle was a blow under the corner of his jaw that loosened some wisdom teeth and one or two molars. Such a blow often instills in the mildest man a thirst that only blood will slake. Eadie looked for his assailant, but he had gone. There were many men, all swinging their fists. Eadie banged the first jaw he saw and being carried against the rail by a press of bodies and, unable to use his arms, kicked soulfully at shins and made some diversion by that means, for several of the rioters limped away with water in their eyes. The hobnailed shoe had a steel cap on the toe and was a mean thing for the shins.

When the throng separated a bit some one banged Eadie on the nose. This was an unnecessary blow, for Eadie was doing nothing but wonder how long this affair would last. Eadie saw the man that did it and went for him with gritted teeth. He got in one hook that opened the other's eyebrow, before the crowd separated them. After that Eadie took no chances. He swung at every one that came within reach, regardless of whether he was soldier or sailor, casual or coast artilleryman.

He could see chief petty officers hurrying about through the crowd trying to restore order. It was noticeable that the C. P. O's spent most of their efforts on the coast artillerymen. There was some undercurrent of feeling between the latter and the ship's crew. Probably there had been differences of opinion between the ship's captain and the commanding officer of the troops, who was a coast artilleryman. Such differences between ranking officers are speedily reflected by the troops under their command.

The soldier guard appeared, hurrying to

the scene with anxious faces and fixed bayonets.

"Hey!" they cried. "Lay off!"

There were scarcely fifteen of them, and at least two hundred battled. They plunged down the ladders to the well deck and so from sight. A long time afterward a rifle soared from the crowd and, having climbed into the air, floated over the side and into the sea. This was the last sign of the gallant guard.

Eadie sat down upon the rungs of the forecastle ladder and gasped for breath. He was not long out of hospital and was easily winded. His lip felt like a balloon, and there was a lump the size of an apple on the side of his head. The sergeant panted and looked aft at the upper deck. He could see his own company commander there, leaning over the rail with a calm face. That man was an old soldier and let the proper authorities quell riots. Meanwhile he enjoyed a fight as much as the next man. While Eadie watched, another officer appeared, wild with excitement. He seized the captain's arm and pointed to the boiling mob in the well deck. The captain nodded calmly. The other officer leaped to the head of the ladder and precipitated himself into the throng.

"What a fool," commented the sergeant.

He saw the officer laying about him with a swagger stick, saw a big gob reach forth and pluck at the officer's Sam Brown belt, and the officer disappeared, clawing.

"There'll be some blood sweat over that, now," said the sergeant.

He looked again to see how his captain was taking it, but that man did not even appear to have noticed the fate of his brother officer. Eadie saw some sailors appear calmly around the corner of the upper deck, dragging what looked like a rope. This they laid down and leaned interestedly upon the rail to view the struggle beneath.

They had been summoned by the officer of the watch and it was apparent to Eadie that they were going to play a hose on the fighters. Being but human, and liking a good fight as well as any one, they held off a while so that they might enjoy the spectacle. Below them men slugged right and left. A man socked his neighbor and received at the same instant a blow from a third man. The first man, turning to see who had smitten him, would be unable to discover, but would make a swing at any one handy, just to relieve his feelings.

A number of men mounted the hatch, whereat all on the deck did their best to drag them down, simply because those on the hatch had the audacity to elevate themselves above their fellows. Black eyes, bloody noses and torn shirts were everywhere in evidence. Eadie looked back at the upper deck. The men with the hose now presented its nozzle, and they had been reenforced by more with the fire hose from the port side of the house.

"It's going to be wet," thought Eadie, and rose to go up to the forecastle, where the hose might not reach him. A hand gripped his ankle and a hoarse voice cried—

"Come down offa that ladder!"

Eadie trod upon the arm that reached between two rungs of the ladder and so regained his freedom. He leaped to the forecastle as the sozzling swish of the streams from the hose broke upon the rioters.

What a glorious weapon is a fire hose!

"Hey, hey! *Glubulurp!*" cried all.

Immediately that well deck was changed from a caldron of snarling faces and waving fists to a transport's deck full of helpless soldiers and sailors, their hair hanging sleekly about their faces like a wet rat's, their eyes closed, and their mouths gasping, while they tried to protect themselves from the stinging water.

Sploshl the stream was turned upon a group who promptly swung their backs to it and hunched their shoulders. The water wafted them across the deck, soaking shirts and breeches, blowing their hair straight before them so that they looked like "Mustangs in a Blizzard" or "Riders of the Gale" or some similar artistic triumph. There was no fight left in that crowd. They streamed from the well deck as fast as they could crowd through the doors and the hose sprinkled them liberally. The navy does not like riots.

Eadie, safe on the forecastle, laughed heartily at the men running about below, trying to shelter behind the winches or under the ladders. A heartless gob at one of the nozzles spoke to his mate and the two lifted the pipe a bit, so that it smote the laughing sergeant squarely. There was great mirth from the spectators on the upper deck. When Eadie could see again, the fighters had all gone and a wrathful army officer was posting sentries.

"That referee," muttered Eadie. "I hope they killed him."

Then he went below to see if he had a change of clothes.

EADIE and Jake sat happily in their warm stateroom. Each had had an extra suit of underwear and an extra O. D. shirt, but that was all. The rest of their clothing steamed on the radiator. They both discussed the recent battle with interest. Eadie had caught brief glimpses of Jake's bald head gleaming among the struggling men like the white plume of Navarre, but had been too busy with his own affairs to pay much attention to what Jake was doing. Therefore Jake informed him.

"Well," remarked Eadie during a pause in Jake's recital, "that was the finest little scrap I ever saw. If I had had a little more wind I would have enjoyed it more, but I withdrew when I got breathless. Hospital takes it out of a man. I couldn't see any use my staying there and getting knocked for a gool. Yup, that was the nicest passage at arms a man could want."

"I've seen better," said Jake.

"Is that so! Well, now that we're on the subject what was it all about? The first thing I knew the war was on. Slough!"

"Too much meat," said Jake, "an' all boxed up an' no exercise. Before I come in the Army I was a hard rock man. Ever hear of the hard rock men?"

"No," said Eadie. "Sounds as if they were an interesting bunch."

"They are that. They're the guys that drive tunnels and the like o' that. They fights with the skinners, the men that drives team. When I say fights, I spell it with a capital and a whole front rank of astonisher marks. Whoa boy! Fight! This here was a croquet game side o' one o' them."

"Say, what happened to that prize-fighter guy? Did he have a heart attack or what? I saw you stand up, I bent over for my blouse, *bing!* The pug was under that machine or whatever it was and then some one bounced a set of knuckles off my jaw, and here we are. What happened to him?"

"I hit him," said Jake simply. "He was going to shake hands and then lay on my jaw, but I knew a better one than that. I didn't shake hands at all. I'd been waiting for some time for a good wallop at him and I was afraid the fight would be over before I got the chance. So I just drove a pile between them eyes of his. When he asks where he's at, it'll be tomorrow night. I seen 'em luggin' him off after they turned the hose on us."

"It's lucky we've got a warm place to get dry. Think of those poor lads down in that vegetable cellar. They won't ever get dry."

"True enough," answered Jake, throwing himself back in the bunk. "I'm glad I got a bit o' dry snuff."

THE following day the convoy entered the submarine zone. Lookouts were doubled, the gun crews stood by throughout the day and night and both troops and crew carried life belts and canteens with them wherever they went. The cruiser left the convoy during the night and when the troops came hurrying up the ladders to breakfast, half a dozen snaky destroyers glided around the convoy. Eadie and Jake inspected them, while enjoying their after breakfast smoke. There was something peculiar about those daubed vessels, something strange and foreign.

"What's the matter with those destroyers?" Eadie asked a sailor, who was himself regarding the new ships with a sour expression.

"They're lime-juicers," answered the gob. "Some o' Johnny Bull's calves. The gobs has to move at a run on 'em! A destroyer's a nice wagon to run on, most of all in any kind of a seaway."

"I though they looked rather peculiar," said Eadie.

"It's the —— ignorant flat-feet they got on 'em makes 'em look that way," answered the gob.

"When do we get in?" inquired Jake.

"About three more days," said the sailor. "Depends on where we go."

"Can't be any too soon for me," said both the soldiers.

They went down to their stateroom, and Jake began to paw over his haversack. Finally he took out his bacon and condiment cans. The first was an oblong can supposed to be for the transportation of bacon, and the condiment can had openings at each end and a wall in the middle, so that coffee could be carried in one end and salt in the other. Jake put them inside his shirt and allowed them to bounce around there.

"What's the grand idea?" asked Eadie, "You figure on carrying rations as well as water?"

"Nope," said Jake, "but I don't have no desire to get cast away on some desert island without my little comforts."

"Comforts?"

"Sure, comforts. Got the bacon can full of plug tobacco. Bought it in the canteen with my last dollar."

"And what in the other?"

"Snuff."

The convoy did not make as much progress as the men desired. The ships loafed along—they were zigzagging now, although it was not apparent from any of the ships' decks—and it was not until the night of the third day that the happy word was spread that the ship would dock the next day. It was not known where she would dock, France or England, Brest or Southampton, but somewhere she would come to land, and the weary soldiers would be rid of her at last. The men were dirty, their uniforms were begrimed with soot from the black decks, the compartments gave up a stench that was very nearly unbearable. There was no way the lower decks could be ventilated and after the air had been breathed and breathed and breathed, and burdened with exhalations from dirty overcoats and foul blankets and the expirations from a few hundred unwashed skins, the air was bound to be a bit strong. The air on this ship was so strong it was amazing it did not burst the bulkheads.

After supper that night Eadie suggested that they go down into the compartment and make up their packs for the last time. They had taken their haversacks up to the stateroom to keep their shaving articles in and, having secured these, they went down the ladders to the hold. Jake went to his own bunk and left Eadie at his, promising to rejoin him shortly. Eadie, with the assistance of one of the other men, rolled up his blankets, strapped them into the pack carrier, hooked on the cartridge belt and laid the roll in his bunk with his slicker over it.

"Where the bubblin' —— you been all this time?" cried an impolite voice at the sergeant's shoulder.

"Who wants to know?" asked Eadie, turning.

"I want to know, that's who!"

Behold the regimental supply sergeant, the man who was first sergeant of Eadie's casual company and whom Eadie had not seen since they had left the dock.

"I want to know," continued the supply sergeant, "just who the —— you think you are! Can't find you for guard, can't find you for a —— thing. Don't sleep in the bunk at night. You and that big onion head been layin' up somewhere! Been runnin' a sandy, huh? Not on me you ain't."

"Well, what's all the row about?" asked Eadie in surprize. "Did you want my bunk? What difference does it make whether I slept in it or not?"

"It don't make no difference," foamed the first sergeant, "but I had to do two guards that you shoulda done! That there company commander says to find you or do your guard, and how was I to find you? Well, I've found you now! Yes, sir, and indeed. Right here at your bunk, I found you."

"Yessir," agreed Eadie, "by hen!"

The other man's face grew purple.

"You're under arrest!" he snarled. "The company commander's gonna try you! I've a —— good mind to put a guard over you."

"I won't run away," grinned Eadie.

"You wait!" said the first sergeant, going away. "You wait. You might as well cut off them stripes now."

Then he disappeared around the ends of the bunks.

"What's all the chew about?" asked Jake, coming over from his own bunk.

"The top kick has been bawling me out," said Eadie.

"Sergeant," spoke up the man who had helped roll Eadie's blankets, "that top used to come down here every hour or so lookin' for you. He sat in that bunk all one day when you was due for guard, waitin' for you. I learned some words I never knew before that day. He's got a dirty mouth, that fellar."

"I'll give yuh two bits for them stripes," spoke up another bystander.

"I'm not selling them," answered Eadie. "A soldier gave them to me and it'll take a soldier to take them away again."

For all that he did not feel so gay at the prospect of a trial. The new army did some foolish things.

"Come on, Jake," said Eadie, "let's go on deck."

THEY went up to watch the sunset. The scenic beauty was not very great. The sky was lowering, and the transports were beginning to wallow in a slowly rising sea. The horizon was dark, and only overhead was there any clear sky, and this was criss-crossed with mare's tails and a light haze, pink with the sunset's rays. The destroyers rolled up the slopes of the seas and tumbled down the other side, making occasional wild rushes to nowhere, and then waiting a while, rolling in the trough, and then rushing back to the convoy again. Behind and above them the greasy smoke rolled from the funnels and went streaking off over the sea, drifting down toward the next ship in line, whose passengers doubtless received that black fog with profanity and disgust.

Eadie was discouraged. The slum had been greasy, he had burned himself on a steam pipe while washing his messkit and the apple he had drawn as his dessert had contained a worm, the half of which he had discovered after his first bite. And then to have his hump crawled by the first sergeant!

"I tell you," he declared to Jake suddenly, "that this army is a madhouse. It gets dizzier and dizzier."

"How long was you findin' that out?" inquired Jake, speaking with difficulty, for what with tobacco, snuff and cigaret, his mouth was rather full.

"I hope that my guardian angel will bring me safely back to my outfit," continued the sergeant. "The army is a lonely place away from it. Guard houses and fool officers, and non-coms you don't know. And fights. All they do here is fight. In the mess line tonight: 'Hey, there's a line here!' says one to another. 'Well I can see it, I ain't blind.' 'Well, get at th' end of it, you ain't no bigger louse than no one else.' *Crash!* Messkits on the deck. Fight. Next guy: 'Git in line, you.' Answer. 'You got a hat you don't want?' Fight. Look at that riot we had with the coast artillery. About what? Nothing."

"Nothing?" interrupted Jake. "Boy, if a mule ever kicks that guy I hit, he'll think some one has kissed him. Man, I just waited till he thought I was no account and wouldn't hit him if I got the chance, and *bust!* Why, kid, he curled up under that engine like he was going to sleep. Nothing! Nothing! Say, all the time he was bruisin' his knuckles on my head I was waitin'——"

"Yes, yes," said Eadie, "I know. But listen to me a minute. Now this top kick of mine that I'd forgotten all about, he claims I'm under arrest and he's going to have me tried. If I'd been with my outfit that would never have happened. I would have known when my turn for guard was coming and been on hand to watch the detail. And anyway, my top kick wouldn't hunt for a man all that time without finding him. He'd dig you out, by golly, if you were following the transport by walking on the sea bottom."

"Let's go to bed," said Jake. "It's gettin' cold and it looks like rain."

They went below.

"I'm gettin' sick of sleepin' in my clothes," said Jake, "I think I'll take 'em off. This is our last night an' I want to get one good night's sleep. I can't sleep in them breeches. They near cut me in two."

"I wouldn't take 'em off, Jake," said the sergeant. "It will be pretty cold swimming around with no clothes."

"Swim ——!" said Jake. "There's lots o' guys down in the decks been takin' off their clothes every night since it got warm and they ain't none of 'em swum yet. An' if a submarine gets us, I ain't gonna do no swimmin.' It's too far to land. An' anyways, who wants to swim with their clothes on?"

"That's a good argument," said Eadie, "but I'm going to leave mine on. It's easier to get up in the morning when all you have to do is to roll out of bed and you're ready for breakfast."

Eadie rested his face on the rough cloth of his blouse and called for slumber. A button crushed against his ear, but that was easily remedied. Thank heaven this was the last night at sea. Tomorrow would find them in the land of adventure. After all, that mattress was lumpy, and bits of excelsior stuck out and scratched a man. It is not so pleasant to sleep on an excelsior mattress that has no sheet. Then, lulled by the humming of the screw and the many little trembling noises of the ship, Eadie fell asleep.

Suddenly, upon the tick of a second, the sergeant was all awake, his heart pounding. He raised his head. There was nothing to awaken him. He was safely in bed and Jake snored softly in the other bunk. Perhaps the sergeant had been sleeping on his back.

"Greasy slum," he muttered, "I knew it would disagree with me."

He rearranged his blouse that served as pillow and lay down again. Sleep would not come. There was a feeling of unrest and terror upon him, his body still cringed from the impact of the nightmare's flying hoofs.

"You're a poor man to go to war," Eadie informed himself. "You're ready to jump out of your skin because you've waked up suddenly in the dark."

He raised on his elbow to rearrange his overcoat and the movement of the ship swayed him against the inner side of the bunk. He waited for the return roll to straighten him up again. Two, three, five seconds he waited. Something fell off the washstand and rolled across the deck, clicking against the bulkhead.

Eadie got from that bunk immediately. It was so dark and the silence was so profound. Silence! Ah, that was it! What made it so quiet? There was no *burrum, burrum, burrum* from the vitals of the ship, no chattering, hurrying, talking sounds from the bulkheads. The engines had stopped.

"Jake!" cried Eadie, leaping across the room. "Jake! Get up! Something's the matter, wake up, man!"

"Whah?" queried Jake.

"Gettup! Gettup! The engines have stopped and the beans are on the floor! Rouse out of that!"

"You're crazy," said Jake now fully awake. "Gawn back to bed. Maybe we've cast anchor or something." That indeed was a reasonable thought.

"I'm going on deck," said Eadie, "I want to see what's coming off. I've had a nightmare and a little fresh air won't hurt me."

"I'll come with yuh," decided Jake. "Wait'll I put on my shoes."

"Did you sleep full pack after all?"

"Sure did," answered Jake. "I was going to undress, but I forgot and went to sleep with one shoe on."

Eadie put on his own shoes and the two hurried out. In the alleyway they could hear confused sounds from the other staterooms, sleepy voices, doors slamming and feet running away into the darkness. They went out to the well deck. It was very dark there and a bitter wind blew hurrying clouds across the black sky. The ship had stopped, there was no doubt of that, and she lay over to port, so that the two men slid very easily down her steel deck to the port rail, where they could see the six-inch gun pointing here and there like a guide's finger. The crew stood about it, a man on each side with his eyes thrust into the eyepieces of the sights, and an officer leaning over the bulwarks and cursing.

"Where the ——'s them other ships?" asked Jake suddenly.

Eadie craned his neck over the rail. He could see the black sea and the distant billows rolling, but of either ship or destroyer there was no sign. They had disappeared utterly. He looked forward beyond the bow.

"Look, Jake!" he cried. "Can you see anything there?"

"Looks like a lotta bugs," said Jake. "I bet it's them. We broke down an' they went on an' left us."

There was a deep rumble from the ship's interior, and before the two soldiers could gasp, she swung back to an even keel. At that same moment a distant grumbling began.

"There go the engines again," said Eadie. "I guess I got you out of bed on a wild-goose chase."

"The gobs on them guns act kinda nervous, just the same," remarked the other.

There were two guns in the well deck, and both crews swung them continually back and forth, with no apparent target.

"Maybe they're doing that to keep warm," said Eadie, "and anyway if you were a captain of a ship and your convoy had run off and left you in the middle of a hostile ocean, you'd be a bit nervous."

"Guess I would," grunted Jake. "Well, if your indigestion's all better, let's go back to bed."

"We might as well," said the sergeant. He lingered a minute, watching the questing guns.

"Come on," cried Jake, "come on back to bed, I'll freeze to death here."

"Let's go," agreed Eadie, and took one step away from the rail.

A bugle shrilled from the upper deck. Away back toward the stern another echoed it, trilling faintly. The officer turned from contemplating the sea.

"There she goes," he said calmly, "'bandon ship!"

NO CHORUS in a finale ever entered a stage with one half the suddenness and clamor of the men swarming that deck. Sailors poured from the forecastle and down the ladders from the upper deck. The planks that covered the hatchways were thrown off with tremendous clatter, and the emergency exits thus cleared allowed the troops to boil up from below. They came up as the dead will probably rise on Judgment Day, a cloud of white figures hurrying up from the depths, pushing and crowding, but still maintaining a kind of order, a silent crowd, in which no man knew his neighbor. Eadie and Jake watched them speechlessly. Finally Jake spoke.

"Bellowin' Moses!" he exclaimed. "They ain't but one in ten o' them guys got on a stitch. An' won't they be cold swimmin' from here to France!"

"Jake," said Eadie, "I'm going back to the stateroom, I've forgotten something!"

"——'s terbaccer! You'll git drowned sure. This here ship's sinkin'."

"Well, it won't sink before I can rush there and back. I forgot my toothbrush and razor. I got to have 'em."

"You better not go! Listen, kid, there's a lotta water in this ocean and if it gets to goin' down that corridor, it's goin' to be inconvenient as makin' ice cream in —— for you to get outta there!"

"Well, maybe so, but I haven't got a life preserver nor anything. Neither have you. And after we lugged one around every day for a week."

"Never mind the life preserver. We're fixin' to ride on these rafts they throw in over the side, ain't we?"

"The rafts might sink. By the way, how about your bacon and condiment can?"

"My bacon and condiment—wow! Slabsided ——! My snuff and terbaccer! Come on, kid, let's hurry!"

The two wiggled across the deck, worming their way through the hurrying mob, piling up the ladders with but one idea, that of reaching their boat stations. The two dived into the deserted alleyway, and hurried to the stateroom. They could hear the scraping and clattering of hobnailed shoes overhead and the faint shuffle of bare feet.

"I bet them that obeyed orders an' went to bed full pack is glad now," said Jake. "I know one that is."

The men secured their life preservers and Eadie his toilet articles, and they went out again.

"Put 'em in your shirt pockets," said Jake, "because we're goin' to shed our blouses pretty quick. There's rafts an' boats an' the like o' that, but I ain't too much confidence in 'em."

When they reached the deck they returned to their old place at the port rail. There was a crowd everywhere but that place.

"Where's all our gang?" asked Eadie in surprize.

"This is our boat station," answered Jake, "I've come to it often enough durin' submarine drill to know."

"Well, there's no one here but these few guys. Where's the rest of them?"

"It's a long ways down to that compartment," said Jake. "It would take them longer to come up than it would the others."

"They ought to be up now."

Eadie turned to one of the other men who stood there, leaning on a bayoneted rifle.

"Where's the rest of the bunch?" he asked.

"I 'spec' they're all daid," said this man.

"What do you mean, dead?" asked the other two.

"Big boy, that train load o' dynamite come right into our compartment. It come right in an' stopped kerblam! All change! End o' the route. Didn't you-all hear it?"

"Where were you?" asked Eadie.

"I was on guard on that ole ladder, else I'd got killed like the rest. Some clomb up the side of the wall, kase the ladder was blown away. Most of 'em was killed by the explosion."

"Why didn't every one come up right away?"

"Why, they wouldn't let no one up till they give the word. We was all waitin' same as like we did fer the drills. Nary one went up the ladder till the whistle blew."

"Looks like we ain't goin' to have a lot o' company," remarked Jake.

Both he and Eadie were having an attack of chills. Suppose they had stayed in that compartment!

"How come the rifle?" asked Eadie. "You aren't on guard over anything now, are you?"

"No," said the other man, "not now I ain't. But I'm clingin' to this rifle. I lost one once, down at Camp Sevier, an' it cost me fifteen dollars. I kain't afford to lose another."

"You hang right on to it," said Jake. "You got the right idea. They'd give you a month an' a month, sure, fer losin' that rifle now."

THE sailors had cut the lashings that held the rafts to the deck and these had been thrown overboard as fast as possible. They were poor things, just gratings, built more to cling to than to get upon. There were a few huge doughnut-shaped things, great rings with a kind of bag in the middle, in which men stood in water up to their middles. There were many ropes coiled along the rail, and these were thrown overboard so that the men might slide down them into the rafts. Petty officers went about directing the debarkation of the troops.

Eadie looked down the sloping side of the ship. The vessel had listed to starboard now, and the port side was slanting enough for a man to slide down. It was a long way down that slippery wall, far down into the black water that lapped hungrily. The rope ends twisted and curled this way and that like snakes, and the rafts rose and fell and bumped sullenly against the side of the ship. There was splashing, shouting and some laughter from astern, where men were already taking to the water. Eadie put on his lifebelt.

"It's a long way down there, ain't it?" said Jake.

"It is that," replied Eadie, his teeth chattering.

It was cold there and dark, and this stricken ship was alone on that vast waste of sea. Eadie looked at the rafts again. Some men were trying to clamber up on one. For the first time since he had awakened Eadie realized then to the full extent what had happened. The ship had been torpedoed. The unseen enemy had struck and was gone. Or did he lurk in the shadows, waiting, to shell the boats?

"What you-all waitin' for?" asked the man with the rifle.

The three of them projected their heads over the rail again.

"Well, I'll be condemned!" cried the sergeant. "It doesn't look half so far down there as it did before."

"Maybe we're sinkin'," suggested Jake.

The thought was like a blow over the heart. Another voice spoke, a new one.

"Well, soldier, goin' over now or wait until later?"

Eadie turned about. A sailor stood there, clearing the ropes that trailed alongside. Eadie swallowed and climbed upon the rail.

"Take off your shoes. You better," remarked the sailor.

Eadie bent down and loosened the laces. He wore no puttees and so stood instantly in his stocking feet. Then he seized a rope and holding his breath, slid down the cold steel flank of the ship into the sea.

Splunge! Glurp! The sergeant came up gurgling, the breath torn from his lungs by the chill of the water. He clutched frantically at the side of the ship, but his finger found no hold. He trod water with all his strength, and began rapidly to weaken. He *must* rest, if only for a second. He stopped treading and held his breath for the inevitable plunge beneath the surface. He went down an inch or two and then stopped, floating gently. It was then that he remembered he had on a life-belt.

"You poor tripe," Eadie addressed himself. "Snap out of it! Don't get in such a panic. You'll come out of this all right if you'll only keep your wits about you."

He began to paddle a bit with his hands. The water was not so cold after the first shock. The ocean is warm in that section, for the Gulf Stream keeps its temperature high, but at two A.M. the warmest water is likely to take on a chill. There was a raft at a little distance and Eadie paddled toward it.

He reached out his hand and seized the side, getting a mouthful of water in the process, but when he attempted to clamber upon the raft it revolved upon itself and turning over in the water, splashed him gloriously. He inhaled a little more water. He floated a minute or two, his head back, while he meditated on what to do next. A few more attempts to get on that raft would drown him.

"Want a hand, guy?" asked a voice from behind him.

The next second a group of men who appeared to be sitting on the water drifted

by Eadie's nose. A hand reached out to him and Eadie seized it.

"Up you come," said the voice, and clutching and clawing, Eadie was dragged out of the water on to the raft.

"Steady all," said some one as the raft teetered dangerously.

"Let's paddle away from her," suggested another voice. "We don't want to be pulled under by the suck."

They all heartily agreed and began to paddle with their hands and kick their feet. Progress was very slow, indeed it was imperceptible to the naked eye. There were vehement protests from some of the raft's passengers against the strenuous efforts of certain of the others.

"Lay off all that kickin' an' paddlin'," cried the first. "You want to swamp us?"

"Well, if we don't get away when she goes down, she'll take us with her."

"Aw, she ain't goin' down," cried some skeptic. "Look at her!"

Following this suggestion all looked at the great height of the ship above them. It was astonishing how high she was, how long and how huge. The upper parts of her, the empty davits and the towering stacks and the slender masts, were so far above them that their outlines were almost lost in the gloom. The list to starboard was not so apparent here.

Eadie remembered that when he had slid down the side, almost at the water's edge had been a band of red paint, probably the uppermost part of the ship's bottom painting. He tried to see if this band was still visible. It was not. There was a line of half submerged portholes at the water's edge now, and even as Eadie watched, they drew themselves softly under water, as a turtle draws in its head.

"Here comes a boat down," cried some one, "maybe she'll give us a tow."

All looked up. The ship's boats were reserved for officers, who, of course, would be the last to leave the ship. Having seen the men under their command safely over the side, they were at liberty to think of themselves, so they proceeded to their boat stations.

The boats had been swung out from the boat deck and lowered to the promenade deck for their loads. They were painted a dull gray, the same color as their mother ship, and it was difficult to see them against the black of the vessel's side. Their location could be told by the sound of language, and the shrieking of the blocks as the falls ran through them. There was considerable shouting and piercing blasts of a whistle.

"Can you hear what they're yelling about?" Eadie asked the man next to him.

"Yeh," said the man. "They're tellin' each other to cut out the hollerin'."

A boat splashed by at that moment, the men in her getting out oars. The raft rocked tremendously. Another boat hit the water at the ship's side, amid a flurry of salt water curses.

"How the cross-compound —— do you cast off these falls?" cried one of the men in the boat.

"You don't cast 'em off, swabhead, j'ever know a signal floozy had any brains? Lift up that iron ball! It's a automatic releasin' gear!"

"Ain't no iron ball here!"

There was a sound of splashing water, shouts.

"Vast pourin' water!"

"Turn off that hose!"

"Hey, you're swamping us, shut off that water!"

Every one in the boat proceeded to speak his opinion of his fellow passengers. The boat had drifted under a condenser jet, one of those streams that one often sees spurting from a ship's side, and this jet was filling the unlucky boat. The automatic releasing gear did not seem to release.

"Take an axe to them falls, you poor barnacle!"

"Ain't got no axe."

"There's an axe lashed to the thwart right in back of you! Ain't you got a knife?"

"Hey, bear down on a bailer, we'll be swimmin' in another minute."

"Is the plug in? I bet it ain't."

A stern voice roared—

"Shut off that water! This is Major Thompson speaking. I order you to shut off that water."

Hearty laughter from the dark.

"You tell 'em, major," urged all. "You speak the language. Hey, shut off the water, you're gettin' the major wet." There was light-hearted laughter from all the surface of the water. "There ain't a cockroach left in that fire room," cried the sailors.

"There," said a voice from the boat, "I cut them falls, an' now let's get outta here."

"Shove off forward!" cried a deep voice. "Shove off aft! Lean on them oars, now!"

A crack of wood, a wailing cry that ended in a gurgle, and silence.

"What's that?" asked the deep voice.

"Signal's fell overboard."

"The —— with him," said the deep voice. "That air-filled head of his will keep him afloat. Give way together!"

The boat crawled away with great splashing, and requests to be "careful o' that —— oar."

Another boat come down silently, as if its crew were trained and competent. The falls were released and the boat shoved away from the vessel. It came to rest a few feet from Eadie's raft, and the sergeant could see that it was full of officers, sitting quite calmly on the thwarts. The waters were becoming crowded. There were a great many rafts floating about, some with men on them, and some empty.

Every so often a raft would be silhouetted on the crest of a sea, its grating against the sky like the bars of a cell. Someone was trying to climb on it and it had overturned. As soon as a raft acquired any kind of load, all the many swimmers made for it, because its load would keep it stable, and a lone swimmer might get on. There were so many lone swimmers that the rafts soon became overcrowded, and one might see a raft quite black with men and, within a circle of ten yards, half a dozen empty ones.

Eadie looked again at the officer's boat. What had happened? The gunwale did not seem half as high as it had. Surely—

Consternation suddenly swept the officers on the boat. They stood up and at that second their boat sighed and went away from under them, leaving them but a number of black dots on the surface of the sea.

The soldiers on Eadie's raft were properly astonished, but they were able to pull one officer out of the wet and find a place for him to sit and shiver and dangle his feet in the Atlantic Ocean.

"Leaky ole boat," suggested some.

"Boche spy bored holes in it," said another.

"Water melted the glue," suggested a facetious soldier.

THE reason for the boat's treachery was none of these. The handling of boats is quite a science in itself and one that is sadly neglected. The Navy, flooded with recruits, gave them as good training as it could, but a sailor can not be made overnight. At that, the Navy in its wildest moments, never remotely resembled the mob that went by the name of "Army."

However, in the darkness of early morning, in all the suddenness of a torpedoing, there are bound to be a few mistakes. The boat had been lowered with two sailors at the falls, who had been ordered to jump in at the last moment. The officers had believed the boat to be in good condition and the sailors thought it had been prepared for launching, since it was full when they got in. Unfortunately, there was a hole in the bottom of the boat that was left open for drainage and the plug had not been inserted in this hole. The officers had sat quietly in the boat until it sank under them.

The officer that the men on Eadie's raft had rescued had a flashlight. He fished it from his soggy pocket and turned it on to see if it worked. It did. There was a diversion of opinion regarding its use, whether it would give their position away to the sub that had torpedoed them, or whether it would draw rescuers if by any chance there were such about. The latter opinion prevailed and the officer flashed his light about on the scattered wreckage, in search of those in need of rescue.

Into the beam of the light came an object like a huge white ball.

"That's Jake," cried Eadie. "Jake! I'd know that naked skull at the bottom of the sea."

It was indeed Jake, who supported another man.

"Gimme hand!" panted Jake, blowing water like a walrus. "I'm 'bout all in."

Half a dozen hands reached out to him. The officer turned the flashlight full upon Jake, who at that moment saw the face of the man he was supporting in the water.

"Look!" cried some one on the raft. "He's got Honey Boy! Honey Boy got saved! Good for you, soldier."

Jake registered intense peeve.

"Have I been savin' that there pug's life?" he panted.

He said no word, being chary of breath, but he opened his hand and the pug, alias Honey Boy, slid under a wave.

"What the —— are you doing?' cried some one on the raft.

"Who the —— you shovin'?" cried others.

"Let him sink!"

"Save him!"

"Aw, he's got a life belt on, ain't he?" "There he is, there he is! Grab him! Don't let him drown."

The attempt of many to rescue the pug, and the attempt of others to maintain their seats on the raft was too much for the craft's factor of stability. Its center of gravity, center of buoyancy and metacentric height wound themselves around each other and the raft, up-ending with treacherous swiftness, slid her shouting cargo into the cold unfriendly sea.

Eadie went down to a lung bursting depth. He came surging up again, skinning his head on a bit of wreckage and began to paddle about. He could see nothing but the upper part of the ship, for he was in a valley among the seas. The tips of the leaning masts were gleaming with fire, and when Eadie had taken a second look at them he decided that it was the sun glittering on them, and that daylight must soon arrive.

He mounted the crest of a long roller and here he could view the many swimmers, a great multitude of empty rafts, "doughnuts" clustered thickly with soldiers like gulls on a log, a few boats—most of the boats had gone to starboard, for the list on the port side hindered their launching—and away off toward the streaky horizon, what appeared to be a destroyer coming up hand over hand.

This last was indeed a cheering sight, and one that did much to revive the weary sergeant. He was very tired and cold and he had a strangely persuasive idea that he might lay his head down upon the surface of the sea and be instantly and comfortably asleep. A man drowns easily in mid-ocean.

Another destroyer slid around the stern of the transport, and her crew began taking men from the water. Boats drew up alongside and the sailors on the destroyer reached down eager hands. Others cast ropes out to swimmers and hauled them in. Eadie shouted two or three times, but it weakened him and he desisted. He felt that he had inhaled about all the North Atlantic that he could hold and he had better keep his mouth closed.

He watched the destroyer with eager eyes, although he was surprized to discover that he did not care very much whether she rescued him or not. The great rollers had a hypnotic effect. They waved before his eyes like the slow heaving of a drapery blown by the wind. They swayed gently up and down, up and down, black against the white of the horizon, beckoning, fluttering, long sleeves on arms that reached to cradle him—*sn'ff—glug*—water in nose and mouth.

Eadie was seized suddenly, dragged into air by the back of his shirt, his arms nearly cut from his body, clutched by another force, rushed through the icy air and cast upon something hard. He could feel that he was upon a deck, a hard wooden deck, but other than that he knew nothing. He opened his mouth to gasp, and salt water ran out in volumes that astonished him. Another bundle was thrown across Eadie and then the sergeant propped his head on his chin and took a look around.

He was on a destroyer. She was low in the water and forward he could see a slender gun and a bit of forecastle. Two men stood near him and others were along the deck, holding to life lines. They fished men from the deep with boat hooks. Other men seemed to be reaching into the sea and dragging bodies out. In reality they were taking them from men who were lashed to ladders at the water's edge, and who would seize a man and pass him to a man on the ladder above, who in turn passed him to the man on the deck. Fishing was good.

This was the destroyer that Eadie had seen coming up. She rolled like a porpoise, for she had no way upon her, and had swung into the trough. Her commander had shut down his engines to avoid mangling anyone with the screws.

Suddenly there were excited cries from the sailors, a distant hurley-burley of voices, and Eadie, looking up, saw what seemed to be the half of a drawbridge slowly rising into the air. It hung while a heart might beat five times, then slowly, silently, like a sword being sheathed, it slid from sight. There was a tumult of distant cheering. Score one for Kaiser Bill.

A man approached and gave Eadie something from a small tin cup. Eadie drank it, although it smelled repulsive and was cold. The sergeant wanted no cold drinks. This one, though, contained warmth of its own. It reacted on the sergeant's interior with no less effect than would have been created by a red-hot bar shoved down his throat. It

cleared his head and brought strength to his muscles.

He rose staggeringly to his feet and looked over the rolling sea, gray beneath a gray sky. The ocean was littered like an unclean street. Boxes, blankets, spread and floating, empty rafts, an overturned boat, pails, life preservers, a mattress, an overcoat half submerged and barely visible below the surface. A little hurrying foam, a little cross chop from the bow wave of the destroyer rolled the coat over. There was a face at the upper end of it.

Eadie's knees refused duty after that. They mutinied and quit their job entirely, so that he slumped in a sick heap upon the deck. Two sailors came upon him before he could roll overboard and gathered him up. They smelled of stale wine and strong tobacco, but they bore the sergeant tenderly, and he was only too glad to lay back upon one's shoulder.

This man had a great chest, with a striped shirt on it, and a little tuft of hair stuck out of the neck thereof. He wore a sailor's hat with a red tassel or pompom and a white cord over the top. He was a good guy, that sailor, and when he spoke to his companion, Eadie could see that he had lost two teeth on that side. The two sailors supported the sergeant along the deck, and lowered him down a hole, where another man took him and laid him with more of the rescued upon a grating. It was light in there, light to hurt the eyes. There was paint to smell and burned oil, and a vast amount of noise. But what delicious warmth! What glorious heat! It wrapped the men on all sides like a blanket, it bathed them like the waters of a steaming tub, it penetrated their soaked clothing and made the blood stir through their half frozen veins once more. The evil-smelling drink went around once more and Eadie relaxed into a stupor.

A long time afterward Eadie awakened. He was very stiff and sore, for an engine-room grating is not the softest bed in the world. The other Americans were standing or kneeling, and a sailor in a red-tasselled hat beckoned them. They went after him and he led them through an extremely narrow passageway into a room that had a table running down the middle. There was food on the table, and it needed no invitation to make those soldiers slide along the lockers that served as seats and prepare to wrap themselves around that stew and that hard, tough bread, and to investigate the contents of those long black bottles.

Eadie looked around the table. The rescued were mostly soldiers and few of them had on more than an undershirt. Eadie wore his olive drab shirt and one man had a blouse. There were four American sailors, three of them in their jumpers and the fourth with no more upon him than his first father wore in Eden. The four sailors conversed among themselves and commented upon the internal economy of the destroyer. Eadie looked beyond them, and then gave a hoarse cry. That hairy frame could belong to but one man.

"Jake!" he cried.

The hairy man looked up and then without further word bounced upon the table and across it, for all the world like an agile baboon. When he and the sergeant became coherent again, Jake sat down, and they proceeded to work upon the goulash and onions.

"What happened to you?" asked Eadie. "How did you get hauled aboard? The last I saw of you was when the raft turned over. I must say that those things are the product of a master mind. I wish the inventor had been with us on ours."

"I'll tell yuh," said Jake. "When that thing capsized, it capsized me. I was just about all in when I got to it and the last I remember I seen it go over. About ten guys fell on me an' I thought we were goin' right straight to the bottom. The next thing I woke up in this here engine room. Man, I ain't kiddin' yuh, I thought I was in —— for a minute."

They fell to upon the slum again. All the men about the table talked loudly and rapidly, telling each other of their experiences, how this one had been in a boat that had swamped, another had slid down a rope and found nothing at the bottom but ocean, a third had spent himself trying to get on a raft and had awakened in the engine room, as Jake had. Two of the men had clung to the life lines on the boat that had sunk near Eadie's raft.

"The first thing I knew," said one of these, "I was holdin' that —— boat up like you'd carry a bucket. 'Kid,' I says, 'I don't think enough of my Uncle Sam to carry one o' his life boats ashore, no sir, not me!' So I let go o' that rope, you better believe, and the boat went right to the bottom. I got my chin over a couple o' the

oars an' I could have ferried myself right home to Hoboken, only this boat come along and a guy gives me a hand an' I come aboard."

"We must be in a harbor," remarked one of the sailors. "Look how easy she rides."

The destroyer was indeed on a very even keel and her motion was scarcely percep tible.

"I wonder where it is," said another sailor.

"Brest, perhaps, or La Pallice. This here is a frog destroyer. Notice them funny hats? Well, as I was sayin', I seen it comin', *zowie!* Just like a white snake. There's a torpedo, I says to myself. *Bong!* She hit us. I'm tellin' yuh the truth, the spray from that explosion near swamped me out of that crow's nest. Kid, she went over to port like she was goin' to turn turtle."

The gob had another mouthful of slum and the table became silent in order to hear the rest of the recital.

"Well," went on the sailor, "I come down outta that, down a backstay. Thinks I, we won't need no lookouts any more tonight. The army officer with me, he was full of duty an' patriotism. He won't come down. Well, *I* went down. An' pretty quick I heard a bulkhead go, and she come back to a even keel, and then over to starboard, an' I went for No. 4 boat. They busted her gettin' her over side, so I did the Steve Brodie. Pass us that bottle."

"What company are you from?" asked Eadie's neighbor.

"I'm a casual," answered the sergeant.

"Oh, huh." The man ate some slum and meditated. "I was wonderin' if a guy I know got saved. He's outa the same outfit as me. He's a prize-fighter. Man, I hope he ain't drowned. I'd sure hate to hear he was drownded."

"Honey Boy, you mean?" asked the sergeant.

"Yeh, that's the feller. You see anything of him?"

"I saw him splashing around in the water."

"Well," went on the coast artilleryman, "I would about break my heart if he was drownded."

"How come that bird is so popular with you fellows?" asked Eadie. "Here's a riot started on the ship on his account and you look as if you'd cry for a nickle at the thought that he might be lost."

"He's a popular guy," said the other. "That Honey Boy is a great guy. When we was at Fort Totten he used to fight twice a week an' it cost two bits a head to see him. All the money went into the mess fund. Kid, we ate better'n the Waldorf-Astoria, I ain't kiddin' yuh. The night we come away we had a chicken dinner, with a keg o' beer, oysters on the half an' ice cream enough to swim in. Then all the lads in the outfit would make bets an' clean up quite a piece o' change themselves. Gee, that was soft. Ice cream twice a week. Sometimes that guy would put on eight fights in a month. An' we always cleaned up. An' then some red head on the boat threw a hammer at him or a bolt or something and busted his nose. Kid," said the coast artilleryman sadly, "that took a thousand dollars right out of our pockets."

"What's this about throwin' hammers?" asked Jake leaning around Eadie.

"I said some one threw a hammer at Honey Boy and busted his nose."

"A red headed guy with a bald dome, huh? A kinda big guy, huh? There's the hammer I threw at him!"

Jake smote the table with his fist and the red tasseled sailors appeared with bulging eyes.

"Is that so?" asked the coast artilleryman with surprize. "I didn't see the fight. I was on guard. I heard some one hit him with a hunk o' iron or something. So you knocked him cold! Hot dog! Well, I'll be ——"

The men finished their supper and went back to the warmth of the engine room again. As Jake slid out from the table, the coast artilleryman, who had been silent ever since his last speech, touched Jake upon the arm.

"Say, big boy," said he, "you wouldn't like to transfer to a good anti-aircraft outfit, would yuh?"

"Suppose Honey Boy ain't drowned?" grinned Jake.

"Well, I guess we could use you just the same."

"Nix," said Jake, "I come in the army to fight them Bushes, an' not go pattin' no one around no ring."

"Don't never pat me," said the sailors, as Jake slid through the narrow door and Eadie, grinning to himself, followed.

IT WAS at this time that Jake delivered himself of some bitter howls. He beat his brow and raved. The French engine room crew watched him from below the gratings and called to one another that the "big red" had gone mad.

"What's eatin' him?" asked the other Americans.

Eadie seized Jake by the wrist, but at that moment Jake ceased his cries and became perfectly silent.

"What's the matter?" asked Eadie. "Are you hurt?"

"I've lost my bacon 'n' condiment cans," said Jake soberly, "in which was my snuff and terbaccer."

The loss was terrible. Eadie and Jake discussed it for a long time. The other men were not very sympathetic. They felt the need of tobacco themselves, they felt it very strongly, but there was none to be had. One man fished a wet mass from a shirt pocket, but even if dried, that brown mystery would be unsmokable. Some one suggested going on deck, but the majority agreed that it was too cold, and since most of the men were clothed in shirt and drawers and the rest stark naked, they preferred to remain where it was warm.

There was an interval of quiet, during which some of the men slept. The destroyer lost way and voices could be heard on deck. Feet clattered down the ladder and a French officer appeared. Behind him were an American army officer and an interpreter.

"Well, well," cried the American officer, "here we are. In such a hurry to get to France you tried to swim, eh? How's your courage?"

The men assured him that it was good. The officer did *not* pass around cigarets.

"Well, boys," he said, after an inspection and a silent counting of the men there, "let's go on deck and we'll see about getting you ashore."

The men went up, crawling slowly up the perpendicular ladder. After the heat of the engine room, the outer air was doubly cold, but there was an American flatfoot on the deck with a great pile of blankets, which he issued out, one to each man.

Eadie was surprized, when his head came above the level of the deck, to find that he was in a harbor. It was astonishing to go below decks at sea and come up so close to a dock that one could almost spit ashore. There were trees like any trees one might find at home. The houses looked strange; they were built of plaster, apparently, and of a peculiar type of architecture.

"Come, guy, never mind the scenery, you're holdin' up traffic!" Thus the man on the next rung of the ladder.

Eadie thereupon climbed to the deck. Jake was already at the rail or rather the lifeline that ran along the side of the destroyer.

"Come here, sergeant," he called. "Hey, lookit. Here's some Bushes."

All within hearing crowded to the lifeline, wrapped in their blankets like Indians. There was a track that ran along the edge of the dock, and on the track a toy train with ridiculous cars and a child's size engine, that whistled piercingly. The soldiers exclaimed at the size of the train, but could see no Bushes.

"Where's them Huns you see?" asked one of the blanketed men.

"Standin' by that car there, see? The one with the canvas over it. See 'em?"

"Yeh, sure. Lookit, there's another one. What's he got on his head?"

The French crew were warping the destroyer into the dock. A destroyer is a mettlesome ship to handle, and it is a bold man that will lay one alongside a dock under her own power and against the set of the stream. The French prefer to do it by warping, even if the destroyer is equipped, as some of them are, with bow rudders.

The soldiers knew nothing of this. Their attention was all for the line of cars on the dock, where, as the ship came nearer, they could clearly see their enemy, a half dozen of him, standing against a car. They had burlap bags over their heads to keep off the rain that fell at intervals. They wore clothes of pea green, with little round hats, and bore upon their breasts the white letters, P.G., which signify *Prisonnier de Guerre*. They stared at the Americans and the Americans stared back.

A Yank sailor, evidently a sentry, passed along the dock, twirling a club. The enemy grinned. It pleased them to see this evidence of the might of the United States, a score of shivering men, clad in blankets, teetering ashore from a French destroyer.

It did not take very long for the Americans to disembark. They had no luggage to look after and no farewells to say. A gangplank was thrown ashore and they went down it followed by the American officer.

"By George," he cried heartily. "There should be some ambulances here. We can't have you walk to the hospital; you'd be arrested. Ha! ha!"

He was a major, that officer was, and wore the avoirdupois fitting to his rank. There is nothing more irritating than mirth to men who have just had a bunch of hard luck and nothing makes a naked man madder than to see a clothed one laughing. The blanketed men ground their teeth.

"So this is France," remarked one. "We come near not gettin' here at all."

"We did that," they all agreed.

"Cheer up," said a tall, light-haired, blue-eyed man, one of those spontaneous laughers, those rapid-fire cheerers of all men who have their troubles.

"Cheer up. We'll all be dead in a month. Ha! ha!" He observed Eadie and Jake, who looked heavily upon the ground. "Cheer up, fellows, hahahah! Never mind cause your pants need pressin'. The girls will love you just the same, hahaha!"

"Jake," said Eadie.. "We're a long, long way from the outfit yet. This is a strange land and we're strangers in it. And it's wartime. They're liable to do anything they feel like with us. These Frogs may even draft us into their own army. I tell you, Jake, France is a cold country."

"I fear it is," agreed Jake, "an' one where snuff an' eatin' terbaccer ain't readily obtained."

The thought was maddening to the hairy man. His feet were cold on the clammy stones of the dock and at that moment a squall of rain swept across the harbor. The major had gone to hunt for his ambulances, and the waiting men looked doubly forlorn. Raindrops upon Jake's bald head did not lessen his wrath. There was a sound of dry snickering. The men's heads turned sharply about. The German prisoners, the bags on their heads making them look like hooded monks, had come quite near.

There was a small French soldier in a blue uniform bearing the letters "A. A." upon his arm guarding them, but he apparently had no concern with where they went. Perhaps they were waiting for a car to unload. They came nearer, grinning, and then guffawed loudly. Jake was the nearest and also the maddest. He cast his blanket to the breeze as does a toreador his cloak. Two steps he took, and his hand was upon a German neck. He wound that German through the air as one springs a rattle. Then he unwound him. After that he dusted off the stones of the dock, and finally hurled the luckless man after his fleeing comrades. The French guard howled and waved frantically to the American sailor who was walking post there. The sailor approached, not with haste, and arrived just about the time that the German sailed through the air along the dock.

"Here," said the gob, "lay off! Where do you think you are, in the Follies? You can't run around loose in France without no clothes. There's *some* things you can't get away with here! Put on your blanket; ain't you got no shame?"

The French soldier chattered madly like an offended squirrel.

"*Parley voo*," answered the sailor, "*vin blink deux francs combien ce swar? Allay* to —— yuh little —— or I'll wipe your nose with this club!"

The sailor looked benignly upon the other Yanks.

"You pick up the language easy over here," he remarked.

Then he walked majestically away, twirling his club.

THIS incident, coupled with the arrival of a truck, restored the morale of the shipwrecked soldiers. Moreover, there was upon the truck a lady Y.M.C.A. man, who got nimbly down and, handing out tin cups, drew coffee for the men from an urn strapped to the step. She issued sandwiches and to each man a package of cigarets in a pink wrapper. The men drank the coffee and lighted the cigarets with which they amused themselves by blowing the smoke upon their arms and watching the hair curl. Another blanket apiece was given out and the men loaded into the truck. They started away and, tired and cold as they were, they could not restrain a cheer. Were they not in France and had they not met and conquered the enemy within the first ten minutes of their stay there?

Jake gushed smoke from every pore.

"These here black cigarets ain't so bad," he exclaimed. "They might satisfy a guy that couldn't get anything better."

The coughing, watery-eyed soldiers in the truck agreed with him profanely. Few of them took more than a few puffs.

"I feel better than I have for some time,"

Jake confided to Eadie. "An' I'll tell you, I just had a bright thought a minute or two ago. That there ship that sunk, she's got our service records 'n' everything, hasn't she? An' she's at the bottom now, ain't she? An' who's to know how long we was absent or what outfit we belong to? I can say I'm a sergeant major, dental corps, can't I? Boy, the Dutchman that torpedoed that old coal barge did us a good turn."

Eadie did not seem especially pleased at Jake's thought.

"Well, speak up," said Jake. "Ain't you glad? Here's your chance to take on with any outfit you want to. You won't have no time to serve, an' no blind to pay an' no stripes to lose."

"Look, Jake," began Eadie soberly. "I'm kind of half witted. I try to think I'm not, but I am. Every once in a while I do something that makes me doubt my own sanity. Now I'll tell you something. I had a month's sick leave and it was renewed twice. In other words, when I turned in at Merritt, I had still two weeks to go on my third leave, but I turned in on the second leave, which was two weeks out of date."

"Well, what did you do that for?"

"I read in the paper that every one that turned in as A.W.O.L. or that went absent, got sent overseas immediately and were tried when they got to their outfits. I had an order to report to some trench mortar battery or some such Volunteer Fireman's Brigade, and I didn't crave it, so I turned in, and here I am."

"Well, yuh got overseas, didn't yuh?" asked Jake.

"Yes, I did, but that doesn't get me back to the outfit. Where are they? I don't know. And I'll tell you something else. The charge sheets and all the papers may have been lost on the ship and still some fool may have been dumb enough to bring them along, at that, but that doesn't make any difference to me. My blouse is out there on the briny deep somewhere, or else some mermaid is wearing it, and in the pocket of that blouse that Jacob Reed took a month's pay off me to make, is my leave. All three of 'em folded up with an elastic around 'em and a safety-pin to hold 'em in."

"Well, you should worry," said Jake. "They got yuh on the morning report as on leave. You'll be all right. Hold this blanket while I light me another cigaret."

"Jake," said Eadie, leaning over and tapping the other man on his hairy chest, "do you know that a man on leave draws ration money at the rate of thirty cents a day and that when he comes back from leave he turns in the leave and draws the money? Well, twenty-seven dollars is in my blouse pocket. That's what that leave was good for!"

"The —— you preach!" cried Jake, opening his mouth.

The truck bounced the cigaret from his mouth and he brushed it frantically from his bare leg. "Kid, you're in hard luck! Twenty-seven dollars! You got any money at all?"

"Not a nickel."

"Well a-a-a-a-ain't y-y-y-you in h-hard l-l-l-luck!"

The truck had come to a stretch of paving stones and that ended the conversation.

The men were not interested in the scenery. The truck rattled through a little town, it's houses of white, yellow and blue plaster set very closely together, their solid blankness relieved now and then by a scarlet sign that bore the words:

AMER PICON.

Beyond the town, wooded roads again and vineyards. The reaction from the exposure and the shock of the torpedoing of their ship was beginning to make itself felt. Some of the men were obviously sick, and a sailor spoke of a sprained wrist that he had not discovered before. The truck turned off the main highway and proceeded down a sunken road. They arrived at a one-story wooden building, unpainted and built of sections that made it look like an extended accordion. It had paper in the windows instead of glass and a sign over the door that announced that this was Camp Hospital Number Something, Rest Camp Number Something Else. Orderlies swarmed out and took soldier and sailor indiscriminately from the truck and put them to bed between sheets, where the doctor who came in to examine them found them every one asleep.

TWO days the men spent in the hospital and then most of them were allowed to get up. One man had developed pneumonia and one or two more were not yet fully recovered from their

ducking, but the most of them were none the worse. The evening of the second day the men were given uniforms, a small cotton bag bearing a Red Cross on the outside and with a toothbrush, razor and soap, a pack of cards and a bag of candy inside. In addition they were issued a mess-kit and then taken across the road to the rest camp. Here they were assigned to bunks in an empty barrack, pending their being issued out to one of the companies in the camp the following day.

The barracks was one of the type invented by General Adrian and was little more than a tent made of wood. It had an uneven dirt floor, wooden bunks and bed ticks full of straw. The men slept well, however, and at reveille leaped forth to look for the mess shack.

"How long we gonna stay in this madhouse?" asked Jake, as he and Eadie scrubbed themselves at the wash trough.

"You know as well as I do," said the sergeant, turning a wine spigot that served as faucet. "They said at the hospital that this was a rest camp and that troops came here from transports, stayed a couple of days, and then went up to their outfits. Well, I'm the only man from the 76th Field here, and I don't think they'll send me up alone. I've asked everybody in the place if they know where my outfit is, or if they ever heard of it. Answer, no!"

"That a pretty good outfit you belong to?" asked Jake.

"I'll say it is," agreed Eadie, rubbing his face vigorously on his shirt-tail, having no better towel. "That's a real outfit. Real officers, a first sergeant that makes 'em all snap out of it, non-coms and every one else. No lip from the privates, either, and hence no hard-boiled non-coms. If a man bucks, he knows he'll get turned in and Judge Duffy will climb all over him. No fights, no chewin' the rag all the time, a mess sergeant that could find food in a desert, cooks that could make a tasty dish out of a bunch of condemned harness leather and a supply sergeant that would steal the pearls out of the gates of heaven. That's my outfit! And to that outfit I'm going to return and I hope they'll be as glad to see me as I am to see them."

The sergeant put on his new blouse and viewed it with distaste.

"There's one lad that won't be on the committee of welcome, and that's young Shorty Mack. He's an instrument sergeant and packs a lot of brains even if he is a kid. I don't think he shaves yet. Well, he was next in line to me and when I was left behind, he probably was made instrument sergeant and got the job of running the battery commander's detail, which is the softest in the outfit. Now when I come back, I'll rank him out of it and he'll probably go back on a gun."

"If you don't get busted," added Jake.

"Naw, I won't get busted. I know the Old Man. I rate a drag with him."

The sergeant flapped his sleeves.

"This blouse is a good fit, isn't it?" he inquired. "Plenty of room to grow in."

"Convenient," commented Jake, inspecting his mess-kit and thrusting the knife, fork and spoon into his puttee. "You won't need to unbutton it, you can slip it on an' off over your head. Let's eat."

They fell into the nearest line and rattled their mess-kits in anticipation. The kitchen was just a tiny shack with the inevitable paper windows, and the men stepped up and were fed quite rapidly. They had bacon, of course, and syrup and coffee.

"Say," began Jake, when he was issued what took the place of bread, "I ain't no chow hound nor no grub crabber, but would you mind tellin' me, just outta curiosity, what the —— this stuff is?"

He held in his hand a sheet of what appeared to be cardboard. Eadie, who was next in line, leaned over and looked, himself. The cardboard did not appear particularly appetizing.

"That's matzos," said the cook's police who served.

"Matzos? What's that?" asked Jake.

"Jewish bread, didn't j'ever see none before?"

"No, I ain't no Jew, I'm a Holy Roller."

"Ugh," remarked the K. P. "Well, roll on an' let some one else get fed."

Just beyond the cook shack were a couple of galvanized iron barrels, very much like ash barrels. These were known to the soldiery as G. I. cans, the initials signifying Government Issue. In this instance they were being used for the reception of garbage.

Beside the can stood an elderly woman, holding her apron in a supplicating attitude. When one of the soldiers stepped up to the can to deposit the remains of his

breakfast therein, the woman would extend the apron. Eadie peered into it with horror and then looked at the two children that clung to the woman's skirts.

"Look at this, Jake," he exclaimed. "I'll tell you that people are hungry that will do that, stand by the garbage can and beg for the food we chuck away."

"Hey!" called Jake to the men in the kitchen. "Why don't you give this poor old bird some chow?"

"Who the ——'s issuin' out this chow?" spoke a voice from the back of the kitchen. "We ain't puttin' out to all the Frogs in France. You guys crab 'cause you ain't got enough yourself, an' here I often go without my own meals so's you'll be sure to have enough."

There was a howl at this, and considerable reference to raspberries.

"Well," said Jake, after silence had been restored, "I ain't got the heart to turn away from a woman and kids in hunger and distress, even if I go hungry myself. Here, old girl, catch this," and Jake, with a heavenly expression, tossed the woman his sheet of matzos.

"Jake," said Eadie as the two hunted a soft spot to sit down, "the Y. M. C. A. lost a good man when you went in the army. You and your kind heart ought to be in charge of a hut somewhere."

The sergeant sat down very slowly and gently.

"What's the matter?" asked Jake. "You still sore from the wreck or have you been ridin' a horse somewhere?"

"Neither one," said Eadie, "but I have to sit down slow and gentle. If I sit down quick, I'm liable to sit right out of this blouse."

"Man," agreed Jake, "it does fit you kind of soon. Be careful when you open your mouth you don't get your jaw caught under the collar."

AFTER breakfast they sat in the barrack a while, and Jake smoked one of the cigarets from the pink package.

"What's doing this morning?" he asked Eadie.

"I didn't hear there was a thing. Let's go have a look at France."

"Come on, let's. We won't lose no boat nor nothin'."

Eadie put on his blouse, not forgetting to mutter about its size again, and the two went out.

It was a glorious Spring day. In the United States the trees were still lifeless, but here they were fully leafed out, and the grass was quite high. The camp was pitched in what had been an old cornfield, for the furrows were still plainly visible. In the lower end of the camp were several companies, newly landed from a transport. In the upper end there was a labor battalion of Algerians.

"I see they've still got us in a stockade," remarked Eadie as they neared the gate.

There was a fence of barbed wire about shoulder high that ran around all sides of the fields in which the camp was pitched.

"I wonder if that wire is to keep us in or to keep the Frogs out."

"It ain't much use for either," commented Jake, "so long as they leave the gate open. I don't see no guard, do you? Maybe we ain't allowed out!"

"They wont do any more than chase us back again, will they?"

"No, guess not."

"Then come on."

They went out.

"Let's go down to that town there," continued the sergeant, pointing to where a white house or two gleamed at the end of what seemed to be a street. They trudged toward them through the white dust.

"T'yer left," said a voice in back of them. Both turned. "T'yer left!" said the man behind again, motioning with his left arm.

His right hand held a pistol, and its muzzle shifted from Eadie to Jake and back again.

"Put up that —— gun!" croaked Jake.

"Git goin'!" barked the man. "Take that road to your left and go in the gate! Now move before I git impatient!"

"What's eating you?" asked the sergeant. "We haven't pulled off any murder. Maybe you think I stole this blouse and I don't blame you, but it was given to me, I assure you."

"You two rums on your way," replied the other man. "Guard house ho!"

Eadie looked at the other more closely. He wore an American uniform, leather puttees and a cartridge belt, Western style. He had an unpleasant face.

"What do you think you're gettin' away with?" the man inquired. "Git!"

The two took the road to the left, which led very soon through a gate and back into the camp. The Algerians were off about their tasks of road mending, garbage hauling and the like, and their part of the camp was deserted. Not so the lower end. The soldiers there were all present. Some were lined up preparatory to being marched out for a constitutional. The rest were sitting about smoking.

At the sight of the two soldiers being ushered through the camp at the point of a gun every voice was stilled. The barrack doors gushed forth men. Eadie raged inwardly. It was bad enough to be arrested, but to be marched publicly to the place of detention and in that absurd thrice cursed, kimono-like blouse, was almost too much to be borne.

The spectators looked on in deep silence, much awed by the sight. Probably they thought Eadie and Jake were murderers or thieves or even spies. The sight was common enough within a day or two. Men taken outside the stockade were always marched to the guard house with just as much publicity and just as much a display of teeth and arms as could be conveniently arranged.

It was a pity that a few ball-and-chain outfits could not have been kept on hand to help out in the pageant. All this for the sake of example. Alas, the example was not strong enough. This was France, and wine, women and song were just over the fence.

At the guard house the man who had brought them in holstered his pistol and turned the two over to a nervous looking sergeant.

"What'll I do with these fellars?" asked the sergeant.

"Why, put 'em in the mill!" cried the man with the gun. "What d'yuh think I brought 'em in for? T'show 'em to you? Coupla —— draftees wanderin' round the road an' you want to know what to do with 'em. Tell 'em they're in the Army, that's what I'd do."

"Say!" cried Eadie and Jake together, but Jake had the louder voice and the former held his peace. "I may be a draftee, young fellar," continued Jake, "but I wantchu to know that when I was on the outside I earned more'n a week than you could in a year an' I didn't have to be a soldier or starve to death. An' furthermore, when I did git drafted, I drafted into a outfit to fight, and not to monkey round swingin' a gun on fellars that ain't armed and sneakin' aroun' puttin' men in the mill 'cause they went out for a little walk."

"Shut up," said the other gratingly, "or I'll wind this gun around your mush!"

"You make a move for that gun," said Jake, "an' I'll take your neck outta your body like the string outta an orange! Try it an' see. If you was twice the man you are, you wouldn't be fit to be called a scurvy ——."

"You said it all," commented Eadie. "I haven't got a thing to add."

The man with the gun was white with rage. "That'll cost you another six months," he snarled, "an' the next time I catch you outside the gate they'll have to have a derrick to bring you home."

"I wouldn't wonder," said Jake, "but be sure you sneak up in back o' me. Don't let me see you first. They'd need a sieve to find *you*."

The man with the gun retired.

"Now," said the nervous sergeant, "you fellars better go inside."

"You aren't going to confine me, are you?" cried Eadie. "I'm a non-commissioned officer."

"That don't mean nothin' to me," said the sergeant of the guard. "Orders is to slap every one caught A. W. O. L. right in the mill."

"We aren't A. W. O. L.," cried both men together. "We hadn't been out that gate more than a minute."

"I don't want no hard feelin's, fellars," said the nervous man, "but orders is orders. If you got a good alibi, you can tell it to the court. They'll hold it pretty soon, 'cause I been ordered to have all the prisoners ready to go."

"Well, come in," said Eadie. "It'll only mean an hour or so, and we'll get out as soon as we tell our story. We might as well sit in here as in that other barrack."

The guard house was a barrack similar to the one they had slept in the night before, except that it had a man with a rifle at the door.

"Let us go over and get our things," said Eadie, "we might have to stay in the can overnight, and anyway, we don't know who might make love to our razors and stuff."

"True," said Jake. "What yuh say, sergeant?"

The sergeant of the guard licked his lips.

"I dunno," he said, looking at the two men doubtfully. "I suppose it'll be all right. You guys won't run away on me, now, will you? I'd get busted if you did. I ain't got anything against either of you, but orders is orders. Yeh, I guess you can go. Johnson! Hey, Johnson! Take these two fellars over to their barracks an' bring 'em back as quick as you can."

JOHNSON appeared with the military snap of a cow issuing from a shed. He stumbled to a stop in front of the sergeant and presented arms.

"Take these guys to their barracks, I said," yelled the sergeant.

Johnson turned and bestowed a fond look on the two guys. Then he brought his piece to the right shoulder.

"Let's go," suggested Eadie, and he and Jake moved off.

Johnson followed, then had a bright thought and, coming to a correct halt, he banged his heels together, brought his rifle to the position of order arms—one, two, three—then executing parade rest, he fixed his bayonet.

"Go on with them," cried the sergeant of the guard. "Never mind this stallin' around."

He went over to Johnson with the intention of giving him a shove, but Johnson at that moment brought his rifle to the right shoulder again, and then turning to see what the sergeant wanted, very nearly cut off that worthy's head with his bayonet.

"Hey!" cried the sergeant, "be careful o' that —— thing. Carry your rifle over your arm! Go on and chase them guys! They could be to —— an' gone while you're standin' here with your thumb up your nose! Go on!"

Johnson moved on.

"He ain't been in very long," called the sergeant of the guard. "He don't quite savvy, but he's harmless."

The two men walked on and Johnson followed them, his rifle in the crook of his arm, its muzzle pointing here and there.

"I don't like being chased," said Eadie.

In Army parlance a man under guard is chased and one who guards prisoners at work chases them.

"I don't mind it," said Jake. "I'm used to it."

"Used to it? How come?"

"When we was at Camp Sevier I was in the mill most of the time. I used to get lonesome hangin' around the comp'ny street an' all my friends in the stockade, so I'd get put in myself. An' then we had a good provost sergeant. We went out an' picked up a little paper and burned a little swill, and come home.

"Many's the evening I sat on my bunk full of supper an' watched the comp'nys comin' in from bayonet drill or singing practise or athletic contests or recreation hour or some other —— fool way to make a soldier miserable. Man, they'd be draggin' along with their tongues out and their old cheeks suckin' wind an' there was me without a care in the world. It ain't no harm bein' chased if the guy that's chasin's got any sense."

"Whoa, Jake," said Eadie suddenly. "This guy is nervous. So am I."

He stopped, and the guard, seeing him halt, halted likewise.

"How long have you been in the Army?" asked Eadie.

"Hay?" asked the guard.

"How long have you been in the Army?"

"Me?"

"Yes, you."

"Aye been in Army three months."

The guard held up three fingers as better assistance to the sergeant's understanding.

"Well, for the love of Mike, don't wave that rifle around that way. Have you got the safe on?"

The guard looked at the sergeant with a cowlike glance. "Hay?" he asked mildly.

"Let me see that gun!" said the sergeant, reaching out his hand.

The guard handed it to him. Indeed the safe was not on. The sergeant threw open the chamber and a shell spun out. He worked the bolt rapidly until the magazine was empty, closed and locked the piece and returned it to the guard.

"There," said the sergeant, "now you can stand on your head with that gun. Come on, Jake."

The placid Johnson executed right shoulder arms and followed them with the earnest air of one who does or dies.

"You got your nerve," said Jake in an undertone. "How'd you know he wouldn't let one of them bullets slide into you?"

"I was afraid he would, that's what I threw 'em all over the ground for. Anyway, I took a chance he wouldn't know what he

was chasing us for. He thinks we want a guide to our barracks, I guess. He and his gang are from the Camp Grant April Replacement Draft, and some of 'em don't even know what branch of the service they're in. I was talking to 'em at breakfast."

IT WAS just before dinner that the sergeant of the guard summoned forth those who were to be taken before the court. The seat of judgment was in a building used as the camp office. He who judged was a small man, a captain, quartermaster corps, whose insignia was so new that the black had not yet begun to wear off the U.S. Each man went in, was asked his name and organization, and whether he pleaded guilty or otherwise. When he had replied he was led out. There were about eight men to be tried and the operation took some ten minutes. The captain then went to his dinner and the prisoners went to theirs. When they had been led back into the guard house, Eadie and Jake sought speech with each other.

Jake's wreath of red hair stood up like so many flames.

"——!" he remarked huskily, "how much did they give you?"

"That ——!" replied Eadie. "I said 'Not guilty,' and he never even looked up. 'Six months,' he says. Oh, man! Six months!"

"That's what he give me," said Jake, "an' we wasn't gone but ten minutes! It's lucky our records got lost on that ship! They'd probably hung us for stayin' away two weeks."

The two soldiers looked at each other in horrified silence. Six months is a long time to spend in the mill, and it is most embarrassing to one who has a family at home to whom to explain what one is doing. Six months, half a year! The war might very well be ended by that time.

"Outside for chow!" howled the sergeant of the guard.

"You want any dinner?" asked Jake.

"No," answered Eadie.

"Neither do I."

They sat and thought upon their wrongs, and Jake from time to time bemoaned the fact that he had no eating tobacco.

"I'll never get to my outfit now," remarked Eadie after a long pause. "When you're with your own outfit you can kick to your captain when you get a scurvy deal like this, but when you're a wandering Jew no one cares an empty Bull Durham bag."

When the other men came back from dinner, Eadie questioned them as to their sentences. They were all in for from three to eight months for offenses that ranged from skipping a formation to being caught in the city after ten P.M. Jake remarked that they did no work, just sat around the guard house. Upon inquiry, Jake learned that none of these men had been in more than three days, so that it was impossible to learn whether the sentence would be served in that camp, or whether they would be taken away to some central prison. None of the prisoners had been in France a week. The greater part had been incarcerated their first day ashore.

"That's the new Army for you!" commented Eadie in high disgust. "Walk a man off the ship into the mill and keep him off the firing line for six months for some silly offense like ours!"

"Sh-sh-sh!" whispered Jake.

An officer had just entered the guard house. He stood a moment chewing upon a match end and looking about him. He was slightly built, and not very old, perhaps twenty-eight or so. He wore a silver bar on his overseas cap, proclaiming to all that he was a first lieutenant.

"I hear there's two men in here from the 76th Field," cried this officer.

"Yessir," cried Eadie and Jake together.

"You two?" asked the officer. "Which one is the sergeant?"

"I am, sir," answered Eadie.

"I've got a horse detail here from the Third Ammunition Train. We're going up to the division and I'm short of non-coms. Haven't got one. You can come if you want to."

"Have you got room for me, sir?" asked Jake.

"What are you wearing a blue hat cord for?"

"They issued me that hat in the hospital here, an' that was the cord was on it."

"You see I haven't any, sir," added Eadie, displaying his hat with a naked band.

"Yes, I guess you might as well come. Grab your things and let's go."

"But we're serving a six months' sentence," said Eadie with a lump in his throat.

The officer said a word. It was an obscene word, but highly expressive and one

that many times fits the case so exactly that there is none other so satisfying.

"As to that," continued the officer, "forget it. If every one served the sentence he got in these kangaroo courts, we wouldn't have enough men on the front to make a color guard for a medical detachment. Let's hurry, because we're supposed to get the train at Carbon Blanc in half an hour."

The two men went with speed. At the far end of the camp they found an outfit with packs made up and in full uniform, ready to fall in at the word.

"You'll act as first sergeant," said the officer to Eadie. "I've only one other non-com and he's a corporal."

"Hot tamale!" gasped Eadie. "Look at me!"

He drew out the chest of his blouse and wound it several times in his hand. He had no collar ornaments on that gaping collar and the sleeves came to the tips of his fingers like a mandarin's robe.

"Gee, I'm a fine looking first sergeant! I'll take it off."

He removed the distasteful garment and, though his shirt was wrinkled and stained with sea water, it bore on its sleeve the stripes of a sergeant and he did not look quite so much like a recruit as he had in his blouse.

"Here, Jake," he said, "carry these for me," and he handed Jake his Red Cross bag and blouse.

Then he stepped to the front and whistled shrilly through his teeth.

"Fall in!" he roared.

While the men were taking their places in ranks, Eadie's eye wandered to the gigantic form of Jake.

"I wonder what that bird has in his mind," he said to himself. "He never told me what outfit he was out of, but it was an infantry one, and a National Army Division, too. Maybe he just saw a chance to get out of the mill."

The sergeant called the roll from a typewritten list the officer gave him, and the column moved out. There were sixty-two men in that detail and the officer explained that they had come over from Newport News with a shipload of horses.

"How did you find out where I was?" asked Eadie.

"I was over at headquarters when that bunch from the torpedoed transport were being sorted out. There were two or three doughboys, some sailors and the rest were coast artillerymen. They said there was one sergeant and a private from the 76th, so I allowed I'd take them with me. I needed the sergeant."

"And didn't they say anything about my being in the mill?"

"Hop! Those men don't serve those sentences. They stay in the can until their organization leaves camp and then they go with it. They'll relieve that ass of a summary court. If they don't, the Fool Killer's liable to ruin him."

THEY marched on to the hamlet called Carbon Blanc, where the railroad station was. The train was not yet in. The company halted and the officer gave the command to fall out.

"Look after things, will you, sergeant?" he asked. "I've got some things to do, telegrams and stuff."

He ran off across the square. The sergeant felt his first stir of apprehension. It was a strange thing to find sixty-two men with no other non-commissioned officers than a corporal. It was still stranger to have an officer go to send a telegram to a building that bore upon its gray stone front the words, Café de la Gare, and in smaller letters, Buvette—Vins Tabacs.

The sergeant turned from contemplating the dusty square just in time to see a French civilian wandering off with as many canteens as he could conveniently carry and two men scuttling around the corner of the station. The men sat in the shade of the *gare* and all watched their new first sergeant. They were strangers to him and he to them.

This company belonged to the ammunition train of Eadie's division, but he had no knowledge of their origin, discipline or morale. The men looked eagerly at the sergeant and he in turn pretended not to notice it. He stood with feet spread, wondering how long the train would be in coming and how long before the officer would come back. The civilian came flapping back across the square and having returned the canteens to their owners, went away again, laden with more.

He was probably filling them with water, thought the sergeant. Soldiers never had brains enough to fill their canteens before they left camp. Eventually the train appeared and at the same time a truck loaded with rations. Two cars at the end of the

train were empty. The cars were square, chunky affairs with doors opposite each seat, bearing upon the panels the Roman numerals III. They were third-class carriages. Eight soldiers were loaded into each compartment and the bread and cans of jam and beans from the truck put into a freight car on the end of the train.

The officer came hurrying across from the *buvette* and climbed into a first class compartment without a look in Eadie's direction.

"Who's the corporal here?" Eadie called, and a fat gray-haired man confessed that he was. "Ride in the chow car," directed Eadie.

"Brown," he called to where Jake's red head showed above a group that shoved their way into a compartment, "ride in the chow car."

When the last man was aboard, he called to the conductor, "Complet!" and the conductor bowed in acknowledgment. The station master thereupon blew upon a cow's horn—

"Wheeeeee!"

The engine tooted in response and the station master waved slowly a red flag, at the same time chanting a sort of farewell. He was chanting "Attonsio-o-o-n!" and he so chanted and waved his red flag and made quite a ceremony of departure until the train had left the station.

"There!" exclaimed Eadie thankfully, sitting down upon a pile of bread, "we're off. Back to the outfit at last! Say, Jake, how come you became a member of my outfit so suddenly?"

"Well," said Jake grinning, "you been sounding off what a swell outfit you belonged to all the time so I thought I'd like to go to it, specially as I ain't none too fond o' my own."

"Did you decide to do it when the lieutenant asked who the *men* from the 76th were?"

"Decide ——!" answered Jake. "I give in my outfit as the 76th when we first come to hospital. If such a outfit as you claim yours is, is in the Army, I'd just as lief belong to it."

Here the fat corporal spoke up from where he sat on a case of beans.

"Are you the two guys the looey got outta the mill?"

"We are," said Eadie.

"You didn't know when you was well off," remarked the corporal.

"What do you mean?" cried the other two.

"Ain't the scenery here swell?" replied the other man.

"Yes," agreed the sergeant, "it is. But tell us what you've got on your mind."

"Mostly it rains, though," continued the corporal. "It's —— when it rains here."

"I suppose it's wet," suggested Eadie.

"Yep," agreed the corporal, "but it's a —— of a lot wetter than you ever saw it."

Conversation languished by mutual consent. Jake smoked some more of his black cigarets and ruefully discovered that his store was getting low. The train slowed to a halt and Eadie, looking out the open side door, found that they had stopped at a station.

"What's the name o' this place?" asked Jake.

"Plessis-les-Orgerieux," answered the sergent, reading from the sign.

"I didn't know you could speak this here language," said Jake. "Where'd you learn it?"

"My mother was born in this country," answered the sergeant. "What's all the row?"

THERE was a sound of strife from the cars where the troops were. The corporal emitted what might have been a grunt or a chuckle, as the hearer pleased.

"I hear singing," said Jake, hand at ear.

"Hey fer the coneyac, hey fer the wine,
Ho for the ma'm'selles, every one is fine.
T' —— with the goldfish, bully beef 'n' beans;
T' —— with the Kaiser an' the —— marines."

It needed no cupped hand to hear that chorus. The windows in the station shook. The station master did his little act with horn and flag, and after an interchange of salutes between him and the engineer, the train moved out again and the sound of singing was lost.

The fat corporal had not stirred from his seat on the case. He sat hunched over, hands in lap, his gaze fixed on vacancy. He had deep lines graven in his face, lines that went from the nose to the corner of the lips, and always mean a melancholy temperament. The corporal had black hair, streaked with gray, and a gray black beard, some two or three days old. He had sad eyes and loose lips.

"That's a wild bunch up forward," he remarked. "They'll probably kill one another before we've gone very far."

"What's the matter with 'em?" asked Jake.

"They're all jailbirds an' murderers," said the corporal.

"How does it happen you stayed with 'em?"

"I didn't have the guts to commit suicide when I got assigned to the outfit."

The train rounding a curve at that moment, the forward cars were displayed to the view of those in the chow car. Frenzied civilians in the customary black clothes waved umbrellas and hats from car windows. American troops could be seen moving here and there, clinging to the running board that ran along the sides of the cars. More hung from windows, in that condition that usually obtains during the first few hours of a very rough passage at sea.

"See," said the corporal. "I told you. They're all drunk."

"Where did they get it?" asked Eadie in mystified tones.

"They sent a Frog over to the bar with their canteens an' got 'em full of wine."

"And I thought they were getting water," muttered the sergeant.

"I had a pull or two of that stuff," said Jake, "but it didn't hit the right spot with me. It tasted about as much like vinegar as anything I can think of."

The train made a lengthy stop after a while. This was evidently a junction point or an important station, for there was a station on both sides of the track and a roof overhead. Song rent the air, as the train came to a stop.

"Tooth paste 'n' listerine,
Mixed in his canteen
Makes the li'l' shavetail's
Face turn a bright green."

There was a sound of crashing wood and the tinkle of glass, and the soldiery swarmed to the platform. Immediately half a dozen fights started. The men were in undress uniform to say the least. Many of them wore their undershirts, and all had removed their blouses and O.D. shirts. All of them had off their puttees, and their stockings had rolled about their shoes and displayed several inches of hairy ankle between shoe top and breeches bottom. Some fought and some sang. The French civilians applauded.

Eadie, peering from the door in horror, saw the lieutenant in command, standing on the fringes of the crowd. The sergeant descended from the car and hurried across the platform. The lieutenant spoke to him first.

"What does this mean, sergeant?" he said. "I left you in charge and you allowed these men to get all rummed up to a million. What are you wearing those stripes for?"

Eadie had nothing to say. He swallowed his tongue several times and was about to speak, but again the officer was first.

"Get them back in the cars," he ordered. "Don't let this happen again."

"Shall I post a guard?" asked Eadie.

"Use your own judgment," replied the officer.

Eadie regarded the milling soldiers. If he was to get them aboard the train, he must work fast.

"Hey, Jake," he called, "I promote you to lance corporal right now. You and the other corporal come out of that car and give me a hand."

Jake jumped down, tucking up his sleeve, and the fat corporal followed him.

"What's your name?" Eadie asked the corporal.

"Joy," answered he.

"And well and rightly named," commented Eadie. "Lend a hand to getting these passengers aboard again. Come on, gang! Back in the cars again!"

Some of the men climbed in willingly enough. Others refused to have their fight interrupted. These had to be pried apart and lifted into the cars. Eadie dug some half dozen or so out of the crowd and dragged another six or seven out of the interior of the station and, having loaded on the few remaining men by heaving them bodily into the cars, shut the door of the last compartment, and sat down on the running-board to mop his brow. Jake and the corporal had disappeared. Well, the men were all safely in the cars, anyway, and the lieutenant would have no kick on that score. From the other side of the train rolled a wild chorus.

Give us a barrel of whisky,
Sugar a hundred pound,
A six-inch gun to mix it in,
A spade to stir it round.
We'll sit on the steps o' the guardhouse,
An' hear all the people say,
"To —— with the W. C. T. U.
And the Army Y. M. C. A."

Eadie leaped to his feet and climbing upon the running board, peered into the compartment. There were some disordered packs there, a few hats, and emptiness. Through the window at the other side could be seen tossing heads, waving arms and many men in olive drab running about. There was a door at the other end of the compartment that gaped widely. Behind the sergeant a wailing cry arose, "*En voiture, en voiture,*" and doors began to slam.

"Talk about misery!" cried the sergeant. "Load 'em in one door and they go out the other. I'll try to carry water in a sieve next."

He dashed through the compartment, looking vainly for Jake and the corporal, calling aloud—

"Get back on the train, the train's going! Get back in the cars."

There was more singing and he could see men going away from the station, toward the places of refreshment beyond. At that moment the *chef de gare* blew his little horn and, at the toot of the engine, all the Americans made wild rush for the cars.

Jake appeared, assisted by the corporal, and they hoisted each other into the chow car. The men fell down, they held on to the steps and were dragged by the slowly moving train, they scrambled up and leaped to the running board, jumping off and running alongside and then jumping on again. It seemed inevitable that many must be killed. Eadie gave a sigh of despair and vaulted into the chow car as it clattered by.

"Isn't this a fine madhouse?" cried Eadie above the rattle of the train. "Every one rummed up and full of fight! How come, Gloom," he cried to the sad corporal, "that there aren't any more non-coms in this outfit? Where are they all?"

"You'll never know!" replied the corporal. "Where are they all? Ain't none. We started out with plenty, but this here looey, he was too much of a man for yieldin' responsibility. 'Sergeant McLuke,' he would say, 'take charge here.' We come to the boat to load the horses. This looey never see anything but a saw horse. He puts a sergeant in charge and ducks. Well, there was —— stewin' there in about five minutes. The dock master come gallopin' over. They sent for the looey. 'The sergeant was in charge,' says he, and so they broke him for lettin' the horses bite and run up an' down the dock.

"On the ship he never shows up, never. Stanchions broke, and a couple o' fiery steeds got loose and kicked each other off the payroll, an' so he busts the sergeant o' the guard. By the time we was at Havre, all of 'em was bust or resigned, all but me. And they wouldn't no one take the job."

"Why didn't he bust you?" asked Eadie.

"Young fellar," said the corporal, "I been in the Army twenty-three years and every bit of it was in F troop o' the 11th. Twelve years I been a corporal an' it'll take more than a three months wonder in a mail-order uniform to shake them stripes off my arm. He can't run no sandy on me, because when he tries to detail me, I ain't there. There's tricks in all trades, an' lots o' them in the Army.

"If that shaved-off tail was to start learnin' now, it would take him ten years to get to where I begun to forget. If he wants to take off them lingery pins o' his an' step out behind the corral, I'll give him a little garrison school. I'll knock that gold front tooth down his throat and put a Three ring around his eye that would go on a eight hundred-yard target. He can't run no sandy on me, the detail-duckin', off-side mountin' jackass!"

The corporal here became incoherent, muttering bitter words that the sound of the train made inaudible. It occurred to Eadie that the corporal had been imbibing drinkables stronger than water. He turned to Jake.

THE hairy man sat on the floor, his body swaying with the movements of the train. He had opened by some means a can of grapelade, a very toothsome jam and one easily the most popular with the soldiery. His lips were innocent of any stain of the fruit, but it was sprinkled liberally on the floor of the car, on both of Jake's hands, and the front of his shirt was bedewed with it to quite an extent.

While Eadie was collecting his wits, Jake endeavored to secure a taste of jam. He had evidently abandoned trying to dig it out of the can with his fingers, and was now seeking some easier method of securing the dainty. His active mind had hit upon the scheme of holding the can in air and shaking the jam into his mouth.

The motion of the car was very great, although the speed of the train was not over

twenty miles an hour. Jake teetered about and shook the can vigorously, at the same time extending his lower jaw to its fullest reaching power, like a very hungry young bird. This simile is all the more apt since his bald head and crown of red hair gave him a rather birdlike appearance.

Eadie took a step toward the other, but at that moment the train went around a curve and the chow car, being the last car of all, received quite a snap, like the small boy on the end in the game of crack-the-whip.

Eadie was nearly thrown out the door, and Jake was upset entirely upon his side. The contents of the can of jam, their last adhesions broken by the shock of Jake's fall, fell down themselves, not in bits, but all together, and Jake's mouth being removed from their course, they smote him upon the ear, *plop!* and mingled very colorfully with his red hair.

When the car had returned to an even keel, Jake sat up, rather slowly and clumsily and, inspecting the empty can soberly, moved it in a circular manner, as one stirs a mug of beer. Then, opening his mouth once more, he raised the can and shook it hopefully. The former contents of the can, falling from their perch above Jake's ear, disappeared into the opening between collar and neck, where his unbuttoned shirt made a gap.

"You ——!" bellowed Eadie, leaping across the car. "Are you drunk, too?"

Jake turned a calm eye upon him.

"No, I ain't drunk," he said. "I don't drink. I haven't had a drink for years."

"You haven't, huh? Then how did you get all oiled up like this? Who threw this jam all over the floor? If you aren't drunk, tell me the color of the jam in that can!"

Jake bent over the can and inspected it closely, holding it on one side and peering into it as one would into a telescope.

"We-e-ell," he said, "it's pretty dark in this car."

"You bet it is," cried the sergeant. "Where did you get that bar-room smell? You don't know whether you're here or there! You fell over when we went around a curve and if you'd been sober you'd cracked your skull on the floor. Where'd you get it? Have you got a canteen full?"

"No," said Jake, "but I know where I can get yuh a little drink if you want one."

Eadie pressed his hand to his brow in despair.

"I suppose that's where you got yours!" he cried.

"I ain't had a drink," said Jake calmly. At Eadie's gesture of impatience, he looked hurt. "Maybe I'm a little fogged," he admitted, "but I ain't drunk."

"What fogged you?" asked Eadie bitterly.

"Well," said Jake, "I was helpin' you put all them rums in the cars. Oh man, that was funny! You loaded 'em in one side an' they got right out the other. Well, I was helpin' load 'em in and they all breathed right in my face an' give me a second-hand jag!"

"Here we come to another station," said the sergeant, "and I suppose all this comedy has to be gone through again!"

"Where's this?" asked Jake, as the train came to a stop.

"I wish it was Avernus!" declared Eadie.

"Well, it ain't," said Jake. "I can see the name. I ain't sure if it begins with a B or a P or maybe a R, but anyway, it ain't a A."

The two sat on the doorsill and let their feet hang. Eadie thought sadly on the prospect of an indefinite stay on the train, totally surrounded by drunken men. A ray of sun pierced the cloud of his mind.

"Why, all they had was a canteen full," he thought, "and all of them didn't have that. When that wine is gone they can't get any more and I won't have such a hard time keeping order."

This was true. There was not enough wine in the company to get the men beyond the tuneful stage, although some had early passed from that to the belligerent. Now it seemed that the effects were beginning to wear off.

Eadie got down and walked up the platform. All the soldiers seemed content to stay in the cars here. In one of the rearmost compartments a man with a tenor voice sang. It was impossible to hear his words, but the other men with him roared a chorus at the end of each verse that was perfectly audible.

> "They issue us soap and a wire brush
> To scrub behind our ears.
> We ain't gonna fight, by a —— of a sight,
> We're the handcuff volunteers."

At the second repetition of this chorus a wrathful form swung from the chow car to the ground and made for the compartment

from which issued the singing. It was Jake, and he bellowed a war cry.

"Now more trouble," muttered Eadie. "Jake will go in there and beat those guys up."

The sergeant remembered that Jake had been drafted and would take umbrage at any singing about handcuff volunteers, a song which, by the way, was written during the Civil War and treasured in army squad rooms ever since.

Eadie did not quicken his pace however. He had had an inspiration. He remembered the fat corporal and Jake boosting each other into the car at the last stop. He remembered that when he had left Jake a few minutes ago Jake had been calm and peaceable and that he was not ordinarily belligerent.

It occurred to him that Corporal Joy perchance had a canteen full of liquor, soft or hard, and that he and Jake applied themselves to it when the sergeant's back was turned. If this was so Eadie would raise some hair and hide. He began to walk quickly toward the rear of the train with the idea of summoning Jake sternly forth from the compartment.

There were sounds of strife from that particular car. Soldiers poured from the other compartments and peered interestedly through the windows of the one Jake had entered. There was a thud of blows, the crash of wood being shattered, shouts of encouragement or anger, and the door suddenly flew open with a tinkle of falling glass. Jake emerged, a handful of olive drab cloth in each hand, and teetering on the step a moment, fell headlong, urged by a number of hobnailed feet, the owners of which were invisible.

Eadie, with an exclamation of horror, ran up. Jake lay on his back and seemed to slumber peacefully. His shirt was in tatters, his nose bled, and one eye looked like an Easter egg, but the expression on his face was one of childhood happiness. Eadie called to some of the bystanders to assist him to carry Jake to the chow car, where they laid him on the floor, pillowed his head with a loaf of bread, and asked Corporal Gloom to look out for him.

"How long do we stay here?" Eadie asked one of the grinning train crew who had been an interested spectator.

"*Encore dix minutes*," replied the man.

"Ten minutes more, huh," said Eadie. "I'm going to confer with this officer. If he thinks I'm going to stay back here 'n' take care of this whole besotted company, he's got another think. I'm going to tell him he's got to detail a guard."

The sergeant began to run toward the front of the train where the first-class car was.

"He needn't think because he's got a little rank that he can get away with murder like this. I'm no slave. He's got no right to sneak off and duck responsibility. I'll give him a piece of my mind, the lazy loafer. Any one that wants to hear a good tirade, open their ears."

As the sergeant approached the first-class carriage he said no more. He looked in the windows to see which one the lieutenant occupied and very soon discovered a leather-bottomed *musette*, such as officers used for traveling-bags, hanging to a hook and visible from the outside platform.

He leaped upon the running board and thrust head and shoulders through the open window. The officer was in the other corner of the compartment. He had his high laced red boots up on the opposite seat, and across the ankle of one was another ankle clad in silk. There were but two occupants of the compartment, and each had an arm about the other's neck. As the sergeant looked in, the officer was in the act of placing a chaste kiss upon the brow of the other occupant, and so had his head turned from the window. The sergeant descended from the running board. He doubted if the lieutenant was in a mood to listen to complaints at that moment.

IT WAS a disconsolate sergeant that swung his feet from the side door of the chow car the rest of the afternoon. Jake slumbered peacefully and the fat corporal spoke words of consolation from time to time.

"All them guys'll get lost," said he. "They ain't drunk yet. Wait till they are. Comin' up from Brest we lost half the outfit."

Later he began on another line of thought.

"If we spend the night on the road it won't be so bad, but if we park at some station you're gonna have fun. Try an' keep 'em in the cars. All the girls in France will mobilize on yuh. Fights! Say, wait till some Frog leave-train drags a lariat across our old trail. The looey'll

take the damage outta your pay. You won't get it paid off if yuh stay in the Army till you're retired."

The sergeant paid no heed. Toward night the corporal stopped his sound-off. It was dark in the car while objects were still perfectly visible outside. From time to time, while the train was halting at the stations, there was a pleasant sound of gurgling from the darkness. The sergeant did not notice it at first, but after many repetitions, he began to wonder what it was. It did not take him long to decide. He leaped to his feet and going over to where the corporal sat on his box, he reached forth his hand and wrested a bottle from him.

"You've got your nerve, old hard luck," cried Eadie, "to go drinking yourself drunk right before me. I'm going to put you in command of the guard tonight and see if you can do something toward earning your pay. See if you can melt some of that fat off your lazy bones. The crust of you, guzzling this stuff openly and you a non-commissioned officer! You won't drink any more, you bet."

"'Sall gone," said the corporal, a sob catching in his throat.

"All gone?" cried the sergeant, holding the bottle to the light from the door. "You hog! It never occurred to you that some one else might like a drink did it? You might have offered me one, even though I wouldn't take it. I don't drink when I'm on duty."

He hurled the bottle through the door.

"There! Now don't let me catch you hanging your lip over any more bottles. If you were a little younger, I'd put a Saturday inspection shine on your nose for you."

"That so?" cried the corporal. "No —— dirty-necked recruit is gonna make fight talk to me. I was a corporal when you couldn't wipe your own chin! No Mex non-com gets away with anything here!"

He arose suddenly to his feet and made a fistic assault upon Eadie, who, easily ducking the swing, thrust his open palm into the corporal's chest and shoved him upon the pile of bread, where Joy by name and Gloom by nature passed quietly into oblivion, and lay snoring heavily.

When the corporal passed out, Jake came to. He sat up rubbing his head and then joined Eadie by the door.

"You're a fine guy," Eadie greeted him

"I was just takin' a little sleep," said Jake penitently.

"I'll bet you were. How did your eye get all bunged up?"

"Bumpin' on the floor. Boy, these roadbeds is rougher than ——."

"Ugh," grunted the sergeant, "you were tighter than a boiled owl. You threw your weight into a compartment full of soldiers and they knocked you for a 'gool.'"

"Did I?" grinned Jake. "They wouldn't have done it only I passed out goin' in the door"

"Now listen," began the sergeant. "You're going up to join a unit of the regular Army. They don't get drunk there, and they don't go around slugging each other. Orders are given to be obeyed and the men obey them. The non-commissioned officers are respected, and they conduct themselves so as to be worthy of that respect. And there's none of this sneaking off and passing the buck and soaking yourself with rum all the time. I'm telling you this so you won't get in the mill the minute you land. You're going to join an outfit where they *soldier*, and if you want to keep yourself in right, you've got to soldier likewise. Get me?"

"I getcha," said Jake penitently. "No kiddin', that stuff they pass out here works hard an' fast. It sure don't belong to the union, that liquor."

"I thought you said a while ago that it tasted like vinegar, and that you didn't like it."

"Well, that was the stuff they had in their canteens. This corporal had something in a bottle."

"What did that taste like?"

"Man, it was like takin' a mouthful o' lightnin'. I ain't kiddin' yuh. Wow!"

"Well, it's all gone," said Eadie. "And I heaved the dead man out the door. Now, no more. I want some help with this crowd. I think they've drunk up all their stuff and if they don't get any more, we'll be all right."

IT WAS apparent at the next station that they were to go no farther that night. The two troop cars and the freight car containing the food were detached from the train and left in the front of the station. This was a very large affair, the largest they had yet encountered.

It had four tracks, all under a covered shed, a huge central building, containing a restaurant, a telegraph office and an office for the French *commissaire*, and two waiting rooms.

In temporary sheds there were a French soldiers' canteen and a room full of benches for the exclusive use of members of the military forces. The cars in which the Americans rode were transported by an electric device that moved the car bodily sidewise to a small yard behind the station. It was dark there, except for the green light from the windows of a neighboring power house, but Eadie took notice that the yard was surrounded by a goodly brick wall, and he had no fear of his being unable to keep the men within bounds.

The officer finally appeared and, summoning one man from each compartment, led them to the chow car and superintended the issuing of rations to the troops. Two loaves of bread, one can of jam, two cans of corned willie and one of hash to each eight men. Eadie began to have hopes of the lieutenant, but they were doomed to an early death.

"After the men have eaten," began the officer, "you'll post a guard, you know. I don't want a man to leave the cars. I'll hold you directly responsible if we're short any one in the morning. Have you lost any so far?"

"No, sir," said Eadie.

"Well, we'll line 'em up to make sure."

The men were lined up and the roll called and after the officer had made sure that not one man was missing, he spoke of stepping into the station for a moment for his own supper. Eadie watched him go and then turned to the grinning Jake.

"Go on an' say it," urged Jake.

"I don't want to say a word," answered Eadie, "because there's none in the English language that is adequate. I know some French ones that might do, but I doubt it."

There was a dry cough from the door of the chow car. They looked up. Dimly visible in the light from the power house was the fat corporal, his eyes swollen and his lower lip drooping.

"'S'e gone?" he inquired, enunciating with difficulty. "You won't see him n'more. They'll all go. He'll come back 'n' bust yuh in the mornin'. They won't be no one here but you. You 'n' me. I won't desert yuh. Friend indeed, I am."

Silence and then a heavy crunching sound. The corporal had reclined upon the bread again.

After supper Eadie posted a guard. He assured himself by a personal inspection that it was impossible to scale the wall about the freight yard, and the only opening therefore was that toward the tracks. Here he posted two men, with positive orders to allow no one to pass, under any pretext whatsoever. He appointed Jake sergeant of the guard and gave him the responsibility of posting the reliefs, and seeing that they performed their duty, while he took the task himself of staying awake all night and being prepared for any eventuality.

The men were fairly quiet. Their wine was all gone and the effects had long ago been dissipated. After ten o'clock had boomed from the cathedral in the town, the station was deserted. A hospital train came in during the night and left a load of stretcher patients on the waiting-room floor.

Eadie looked them over and thrilled with the thought that these men had been wounded only the day before. The war was not far off. He would be in it very soon, provided his officer did not have him thrown into some dungeon for letting a whole company fade into thin air. This thought reminded him that he had been in the station too long. It was time he went back to the cars. He hurried out, a vague feeling of alarm speeding his footsteps.

The sentries were calmly walking their posts, and Jake, a very contrite Jake, watched them from a nearby seat. Still Eadie was not satisfied. The yard lay grim and dark, mysterious beyond the beam of light from the power house. Eadie could swear he heard voices back there. Maybe those birds were trying to shin over the wall. The sergeant started in that direction. As he crossed the patch of light, there was a rapid volley of shots.

"Now they're off!" cried Eadie. "I'm a little nearer the battle than I thought."

He ran in the direction of the firing, remembering that he was unarmed, but unable to do anything about it. If there was a riot or a killing on, he wanted to get there immediately. He skipped over tracks, ducked around mysterious freight cars, and ran up and down silent lines of canvas-covered gondolas. Nothing. The place was deserted.

Suddenly, as he turned a corner around an empty car, he heard a clamor of voices, undertones, whispers, curses, hurried directions, orders, recriminations and a horrible dripping, splashing sound that curdled his blood. At the same time some watcher must have caught sight of him. The sergeant was very near the outer wall of the yard and an arc light from the street outside shone in and had discovered him to an unseen watcher. There was a hurried scramble of feet, mutters of alarm and many fleeing men.

"Halt!" cried the sergeant. "Halt, or I'll fire!"

The men fled like leaves before the gale. They were gone and the sound of their running feet was lost before the sergeant could make a move toward their apprehension. The dripping sound continued, indeed it was louder. The sergeant ducked under a car, crawled across the tracks on his hands and knees and stood up.

Things were easily visible here. The arc light from the street shone down brightly. Stretching up toward the sky, arching its great back like some prehistoric beast, was a huge barrel, a hogshead many times overgrown, a barrel that was bigger than any watertank Eadie had ever seen. This mastodon among barrels lay upon its side on a flat car. Upon its flank, dimly seen, were the words: "R. Dumont et Fils, Medoc."

But this beast had been wounded, he bled terribly. Streams of dark liquid spouted from his side and ran over the edge of the flat car in little waterfalls. There was a heavy smell of crushed grapes in the air. Eadie thrust an inquisitive finger into one of those dark fountains, then carried the finger to his nose. Wine. So this was a tank car, for the transportation of wine. Trust the American soldier to smell it out.

They had discovered the car, rallied to it in great numbers, blown holes in it with their 45's and caught its blood with tin hats, mess cups, canteens and G. I. buckets. All this Eadie could read in the ragged edges of the holes in the great barrel, the shots and the débris of hasty flight. The men had, despite their surprize and retreat, probably carried off enough to keep themselves flaming like light-houses for the rest of the trip.

Then Eadie had a bright thought, an inspiration, a stroke of genius. There would be trouble when the French railroad authorities found their barrel full of lead and empty of wine, but the sergeant thought little of that. He hurried back to his guard.

"Jake, come here," he cried. "You circulate around those cars and tell every one that I've gone to tell the French *commissaire* about the tank car being shot up, and that any one that's caught out of the cars will be picked up by the French and accused of doing it. They better all be asleep when I come back with the Frog officer. I want to show him we didn't have a man awake and that of course we couldn't steal his wine."

The scheme worked. Eadie took a run around the station and when he returned the cars were wrapped in thick silence. He poked his head into every compartment, but found no man who did not counterfeit sleep. So quiet and calm were they that after an hour or two he relieved the guard, risking the officer's wrath for doing so, and went to sleep himself, parked on the running board of a car, to wait until the officer should return, or daylight come.

A ROUGH hand brought Eadie to consciousness. It was a gray dawn, one that presaged rain. A very small Frenchman, wrapped in an old regulation blue overcoat and wearing what had once been a kepi, was shaking the sergeant vigorously.

"What's the matter?" asked Eadie, prying his eyelids apart with his fingers.

"Eh!" cried the Frenchman. "*Leves donc!*" at the same time making lifting motions with both hands.

"*Quelle heure*, my lizard?" asked the sergeant.

"Four," answered the other, "you have but ten minutes. Hurry. It is the hour of departure."

"Eh, well," said the sergeant, yawning, "one but needs to attach the cars to the train."

"Nonononononono!" cried the little Frog. "The cars rest here. It is the soldiers who must take yet another train."

"Flame of my heart!" howled the sergeant. "Who told you? You speak of impossibilities."

"*Voici l'ordre*," said the other, displaying a pink slip of paper.

"But in ten minutes!" gasped the sergeant.

"No," said the little man, waving his finger slowly back and forth in front of his nose, "not ten. You have now but eight."

"OUTSIDE!" bellowed Eadie. "Downstairs! Everybody up! Rise and shine!"

He leaped upon a running board and, thrusting head and shoulders into a compartment, smote the nearest men on the nose.

"Get 'em all up," he yelled, "five minutes to catch a train!"

He ran from compartment to compartment, calling, yelling himself hoarse and commenting. He found no sign of the officer.

"Up, men, everybody up! Yay, Jake! Issue out the chow. Give every man all he can carry. Take it away! Heave it out. Come on, roll out of those blankets! I wish I was a swearing man, I'd say a few words! Come on! Here's the train now!"

Sure enough, it rolled into the station and the men rushed toward it, dragging blankets, blouses and unrolled puttees across the platform. Some carried several loaves of bread, others dashed after cans of beans they had dropped, that rolled swiftly along the platform with devilish speed.

"Get on," cried Eadie. "Never mind where, but get on. Any one see any sign of the officer?"

No one seemed to. Every one was too busy, climbing aboard, and the train went suddenly on its way without any waving of flags or any tooting of whistles. The last of the men was aboard, but there was quite a pile of property on the platform, rifles, blankets, pack carriers and what not.

The sergeant looked rapidly around, but there was no sign of the officer. Meanwhile the train gathered speed. The sergeant began to run for the nearest car, but it was going too fast when he got to it. There was a commotion and a man leaped from the last car. It was Jake. He and the panting sergeant watched the train out of sight around a curve.

"Jake, there's a fine mess," said the sergeant. "Away they've gone and they'll probably all be pinched. The looey has our travel orders. It's just as well I didn't get on."

"I would say," commented Jake, "that that looey is the limpest stick that I ever hooked up with in all my travels."

"You said it, Jake," agreed the sergeant.

Before the two had time to collect their thoughts the officer stood at their elbow, panting slightly and with his clothing somewhat in disarray.

"Everything all right, sergeant?" he asked.

"No, sir," answered the sergeant. "The French got us up and gave us about ten minutes to get a train."

"Did all the men get it?" asked the lieutenant earnestly, while Eadie marveled that he took the matter so calmly.

Then Eadie had a sad thought that the officer had probably stopped in the station and knew about it already.

"Yes, sir," said Eadie. "They all got it except the two of us. We didn't want to abandon you, because you might have met with an accident."

"When is the next train?" asked the lieutenant. Eadie inquired of one of the railway employees.

"The Frog says ten o'clock," answered the sergeant.

"Good," said the lieutenant. "I'll see you then. I'm going back up town." He went away at the trot.

"Aha!" said Jake sagely. "Monkey beezness."

The five hours that intervened before the departure of the next train the two spent in breakfasting from a can of hash that they found in one of the abandoned packs, in selling all the slickers and shoes that were in the pile that had been left behind and in wandering about the station. Eadie sought speech with a young soldier of about his own age who was attached to the *commissaire's* office.

The *commissaire* was a military officer, and there was one at every large station to supervise the troop movements through his particular railroad division. The young man with whom Eadie conversed was an aspirant, a student officer, a grade that has no equivalent in the American service. The aspirant was hung with so many medals that it made him humpbacked. He was minus an arm and so lame that he could not walk without a cane.

"*Alors*, my aspirant," began Eadie, "I am the *sous*-off in charge of the crowd of lice that went out of here on the four o'clock train. They have gone into the unknown. What will become of them?"

The aspirant grinned.

"Your monkey was here," said he, "very excited that troops should go without him. It is all right. They can not go beyond Rennes, where there is another *commissaire*, who will take them from the train if they have no transport orders."

"What do you mean monkey?" asked Eadie.

"*Ouistiti?*" queried the officer. "He was a second lieutenant, was he not? That is what his rank would have been in our service."

"Good," muttered Eadie. "We live and learn French."

He examined the other's medals. Legion of Honor, Military Medal, Croix de Guerre with two palms and a fistful of stars, and three others, one the British Military Cross, and the other two medals that Eadie did not recognize. The young man wore the anchor insignia of the French colonial troops.

"You have some very fine medals," remarked Eadie.

"Ah, yes," said the aspirant, shrugging his shoulders. "But I rather would have my arm. Nor do medals, you know, help one to walk."

"Thank you, indeed, for your information," said Eadie, and fled back to Jake.

THE officer appeared shortly before ten and when the train arrived, the three mounted it and were borne away toward Rennes. The officer rode with the other two, though he slept most of the time so that there was little opportunity for conversation. When they arrived at Rennes it was early evening, and the United States owed Jake and Eadie two meals.

They descended lightly from the train and the officer hurried across to the station to find out where his men were. Very soon he came back and directed Eadie to go to the French Red Cross hut, where he would find the soldiers, and march them to the rest camp behind the station where he, the officer, would meet them again. Jake was to remain with the officer.

Accordingly Eadie went to the Red Cross hut. It had evidently been an old freight shed, but it had been whitewashed and was hung with bunting and patriotic lithographs. With benches and tables painted a light blue it was cheery enough. The sight of the interior should not have a very depressing effect, but it did to the sergeant. He searched high and low, his heart going lower and lower like mercury at the approach of a frost, and at the end of his effort, the best he could do was to round up four men.

"Where's the rest of them?" asked Eadie.

"Dunno," said the four.

"Well, where do you think they are?"

"Huh!"

"Where did they say they were going?"

"They said somethin' about seein' the sights."

"When will they be back? Did they say? How long have they been gone?"

"They won't be back," said one man with an air of conviction, "until their francs is all gone an' that won't be soon, fer we was only paid day before yesterday."

"Come with me," said Eadie wearily, "to the rock that's higher than I."

He led the four to the group of Adrian barracks that formed the rest camp.

"Sir," said he to the officer. "this is all that is left. I haven't the slightest idea where the others are."

"They're up in the town," said the lieutenant calmly. "You'd better go and find them. We'll leave here tomorrow morning at about seven. That ought to give you time enough. You," indicating Jake, "take charge here at the camp and don't let any one go that the sergeant sends back."

As Eadie left the camp to go up to the city, a hand seized his sleeve. He looked up. Jake had run through one barrack and doubled back through the other, and thus headed the sergeant off.

"Lookit, sergeant," began Jake earnestly, "to —— with that guy! Let's you an' me go over the hill. We got some change from sellin' them clothes. To —— with the whole bunch. Come on! He'll run you ragged an' probably bust yuh at the end of it after all!"

"Nix," said Eadie. "The Frogs told me that we're going to Coetquidan, about four hours' ride away. This looey bird comes from my division, you know, and he could prefer charges against me and have me laid away. They don't hold kangaroo courts in my outfit. No, I've got to soldier with the indecent, lecherous hound for another day, and then I'm done.

"It's a judgment on me for not obeying orders and going to the outfit I was assigned to in Camp Merritt. All my hard luck,

stockade, shipwreck, trial and various miseries date from the time I tore up my orders and turned in as a deserter. A fool never learns. Now I've got to go out and round up fifty-four soldiers between now and seven o'clock. The name of this city is Rennes. That's all I know about it. It looks to me like a big town and the bigger it is, the less chance I have of finding the drunken and licentious soldiery that I am hunting for.

"This time tomorrow, Jake, I'll be with my own outfit and that's the only ray of sun on my black sky at present. All the other troubles fade when I think of that. No more of this rat-kissing."

Then the sergeant went away, up the broad boulevard that led to the center of the town.

Rennes is quite a city. It contains a number of barracks and one that is very new and large. There is also there perhaps as fine a military museum as there is in Europe. Rennes is, in short, not only in time of war, but in time of peace, a garrison town. All those things that go to make the European soldier's life bearable were in Rennes in abundance. Any city in France is old in the ways of wickedness, a Sodom and Gomorrah that the most corrupt city administration in the United States would not tolerate for an instant, and a garrison city is to an ungarrisoned city as New Orleans is to Boston. Americans, both civil and military, having been brought up with "Thou shalt not" ever before their eyes, take kindly to the cities of France.

So the sergeant went up and down. He inquired of the police and he sought assistance from *gendarmes*. He spoke with French, American, and Belgian soldiers. Some of those he sought he found on the streets. Others he perforce found within doors and bribed an M. P. to go in and get them. He dared not send these men back to the station alone. That would be folly, so he kept them with him. After he had accumulated about fifteen, it was easier to get more, for all that beheld the crowd came to see what the excitement was. Eadie noticed after a time, that while he continued to find men walking in the street, reclining in the parks and sitting in cafes and elsewhere, the number he had with him did not increase. With a large crowd and a dark night and in narrow, winding streets, it is very easy for men to slip away again. From two o'clock until daylight Eadie did not find a man and at last he reluctantly turned back to the station.

Eadie counted his men.

"Hm!" he said bitterly, "twenty-nine."

A voice spoke from the darkness.

"No, it was nineteen."

There was a crackle of laughter to which the sergeant paid no heed, but led his men back through the morning mist. He was sleepy and very tired and his opinion of all the army was most unprintable.

An hour's sleep on an unmattressed wooden slatted bunk in the barrack and Eadie felt better. Jake awakened him in time to have a cup of coffee at the French Red Cross and then the two hurried back to the station.

"Are all the gang still here?" asked the sergeant, grinning.

It pleased him to think that this was his last day as a Wandering Jew, that his long pilgrimage was at an end, and that he would very probably eat supper with his outfit.

"Are all the gang still here?" he inquired lightly.

"All but about fifteen," answered Jake.

"Fifteen gone again! Do you mean to say that we've only got sixteen men left out of sixty-odd?"

"Ever try to hold a handful of quicksilver?" asked Jake.

THE officer they found very mild. He had nothing to say. Perhaps he had in mind the possibility of official inquiry regarding his heavy casualties and the fact that the sergeant might say something about the officer's having missed the train the morning before. On the other hand the sergeant might not say anything, according to the way the sergeant felt toward the officer.

He loaded the remnant of his command into a freight car and got in himself. Jake and Eadie, having rank, mounted to the little tower on the end of the car where the brakeman sits and set their faces toward the country. This tower is a fine place from which to view the scenery and the sergeant remarked thereon. It was a glorious day and the province of Brittany is not one of the least attractive of France.

"I wonder what become of Corporal Gloom?" said Jake.

"I saw him," said Eadie grinning. "He was having too good a time to bring him

away. I didn't have the heart. He was a gloomy jinx, anyway."

"Had a coupla girls, I suppose," guessed Jake.

"Three. And the tears were running down his cheeks a perfect stream. He probably had a month's pay worth of champagne under his belt."

"I got some breakfast," said Jake. "It ain't much, but it'll do."

He produced a cake of chocolate and the two fed thereon.

At noon they disembarked. Here was the end of the journey. A tiny railroad station, a tiny town, and a white dusty road, with a sign that read:

CAMP DE COETQUIDAN, 2 KILOS.

The officer lined up the men on the platform, and Eadie surveyed them before descending from his tower. Alas!

Of the proud company that had marched out of the rest camp so gaily two days before, but twelve men remained. Some had even been lost since leaving Rennes. Two days ago these men had had each a full pack, extra shoes, slicker, overcoat, canteen, cartridge belt and what not. Now they at least had their O. D. shirts, but that was nearly all. Some had no puttees, many were hatless, one man was barefooted. Their blankets and other equipment had melted like grease in a hot mess-kit. The lieutenant looked them over.

Eadie twitched Jake's sleeve and, pointing to the sign on the road, gave his head a jerk over his right shoulder. Jake understood and the two, dropping to the ground on the far side of the track, departed up the white road at a brisk trot. They ran down a slight grade and knowing they were safely out of sight, sat down to catch their breath.

"Won't he burn yuh for beatin' it?" asked Jake.

"I doubt it," said the sergeant. "He wouldn't have the nerve. I've got something on him. When I was dragging two guys out of a joint last night, lo, he was there. He knows I saw him, too. Now then, for the camp. I hope they have some dinner left."

The Camp de Coetquidan was a training camp for artillery. Three regiments were there, two light and one heavy, a full brigade. The two knew they were approaching the camp when they were yet half a mile away, for both sides of the way were lined with wooden buildings of light construction, having before their doors benches and tables, and painted on their fronts, "*Rendezvous des Artiflots*," "*Aux Alliés Americains*," "*Galleries du Printemps*," "*Maison Durand et des Boshommes*."

"You see," said Eadie, "all these drink houses are empty."

"I see," said Jake, "but maybe they have retreat here same as everywhere else."

This thought seemed to be correct, for as they entered the gate, flanked on either side by sentry boxes and very military looking guards, they heard the faint strains of "To the Color," and then, in a moment, the crashing of the "Star Spangled Banner."

"Band's a little out of tune, ain't it?" asked Jake, after he had saluted and could walk on again.

"That band did sound rather wet," agreed Eadie. "It couldn't have been *my* band. Why, when we were at Camp Shelby we won the camp championship over about fifteen bands. Boy, my outfit has got as good a band as there is in the army. That was probably some medical corps band, or maybe the Frogs loaned us one of theirs for retreat."

Jake grunted.

"Here comes your friends," said he, "an' they must be goin' to a fire."

Groups of soldiers were running down the road and cutting cross lots between the wooden barracks. They were raising quite a cloud of dust.

"They must be hurrying to catch a train," said Eadie in a puzzled manner, wondering if there was a town nearby that these men yearned to visit so that they would run to it like that.

"It couldn't be that they was hurryin' to get out to one o' them 'Ox Alleys' places, could it?" queried Jake innocently. The sergeant made no reply.

A band appeared, marching back from the parade ground, with their instruments under their arms. Before them stalked the drum major, his glittering staff with its crimson cords falling and rising as he marked the time, his left arm at just the right angle on his hip, his face stern and military. It is not usual for the drum major to perform unless the band is playing. This Eadie thought, as the band stepped rapidly by.

The bass drummer, bearing his unwieldly instrument before him, was evidently in

distress. He would run a few steps, then lag behind, then run a few more, then lag again. His knees had hinges in them. His eyelids drooped and his mouth hung open.

Finally, with the strength of despair, and making a final effort, as a match flares before it goes out, he ran ahead, collided with the rear rank of the band, his feet turned upon themselves, his knees collapsed, and the drummer fell headlong, crashing into ruin his great drum.

The force of the collision of the drum with the rear rank had much the same effect as the fall of one wooden soldier in a line. It upset the equilibrium of the whole band. They fell forward, all of them. A cornet player collapsed and lay unheeded in his tracks. Another fell upon his face like a man of wood, and got up again laboriously with no effort to see what had stricken him down. A trombonist, feeling the weight of a fellow bandman in the small of his back, took two great strides and thrust his instrument against the head of a man before him, who fled shrieking into the nearest barrack.

Those that had fallen got themselves to their feet, their eyes always to the front, and hurried painfully on, as if they feared that some one might see their discomfiture. Meanwhile, the drum major, who had gained some ten yards on his band, continued down the street, hand on hip, his gorgeous baton still rising and falling in cadence.

"That's a great band," said Jake to the speechless Eadie. "That couldn't be your band, though, 'cause your outfit don't drink."

EADIE said no word. He looked about for a sentry. There was a man in tin hat, pistol and gas mask who walked rapidly up and down at the head of a street. He walked one hundred and twenty steps a minute and swung his arms. When he came to the end of his post, he halted, banged his heels and executed about face by the numbers. Then he marched back again. While the sergeant watched, the man came to a distinct halt one-two, click! and took a very soldierly position of parade rest.

"Go on, speak to him," urged Jake. "Maybe he ain't drunk, maybe he's just a —— fool—I know there's lots o' them in the army. I can name yuh two offhand."

"Hey, sentry," called Eadie. "Where's the 76th Field?"

"Two blocks over," said the man, clearly and distinctly enough.

"Thanks," said Eadie. "What do you mean, drunk?" he inquired of Jake. "That's the way they walk post in this outfit. This is a soldierin' outfit."

"Uh-huh!" said Jake. "So I perceive."

"Now, then," began Eadie, when he had come to the second block, "this is my outfit. See that barrack with 'A' painted over the door? That's *my* battery."

"Yeh?" said Jake. "Sounds interestin'. Let's go over an' get acquainted."

As they drew near the barrack the sound of many voices came to their ears. The barrack walls seemed to bulge. There was an excess of conversation in that building and it was being carried on in loud, clear tones. Eadie opened the door and went in.

A war strength battery of field artillery has something over a hundred men on its rolls. When all these men are crowded into a small oblong building, in which two-thirds of the floor space is taken up by a permanent shelf running along the wall on either side, there is likely to be some confusion. The shelf and the aisle that ran between were filled with men, some talking, others singing, but all active. Here and there, arms and legs stretched wide, was one who had succumbed and had no interest in the proceedings.

In that room could be seen the quartet that sang tunes down their noses, the earnest converser with a blank wall, the argumentative man who wagged his finger under the nose of him who sat with vacant look, the pair that talked interestedly of nothing, both nodding their heads and their jaws at the same time, the pair that hung on each other's necks and wept, and the pair that fought, each knocking the other down, and being knocked down in turn.

As Eadie stood there open mouthed, a young man came up to him and frowned at him with every evidence of hearty dislike. The young man could not have been much over twenty, if he was that old, and he was about five feet tall. He had a smooth round face, with baby blue eyes, and his heavy frown was all the more ludicrous for that reason.

"Why hello, Shorty," cried Eadie, and

extended his hand with glee, for Shorty was one of his best friends.

"You ——!" said Shorty sourly.

At the sound of the fighting words, one of the recumbent figures on the shelf shot suddenly to his feet and smote Shorty a terrific blow on the jaw. Shorty's eyelids fluttered shut, he swayed and fell very easily over on to the other shelf, where his assailant fell on top of him and they both rolled inertly to the floor.

"Nice amiable outfit," remarked Jake, in a tone of deepest interest. "No one slugs no one else here."

At the far end of the barrack was a continuous turmoil, a constant shifting and whirling of men. Eadie went down to it as a man walks in a dream. He noted here and there a face that he knew, but there was no light of recognition in any eye. Suddenly he halted. The cause of the young riot was visible now.

The sleeping shelves were built against the wall like counters in a fruit store, sloping gently to a height of about three feet from the floor and running the whole length of the building. On the left-hand shelf a machine gun had been set up and men clamored about it. A great long-armed man, yclept the "Big Ham," and well known to Eadie, sat on the saddle of the gun. With one hand he swept the muzzle back and forth, knocking it against the shins of the milling men, and with the other he smote every one that came within reach, crying at the same time.

"We gotta have discipline in this outfit!"

On the other side of the gun, vainly endeavoring to thrust a clip into it, was another man. A hand shot forth from the crowd, and seizing the loader's collar, tore it away bodily. Again the hand reached out, this time gripping the loader by the hair and dragged him away. Another man, perhaps he who had dragged away the former incumbent, took the loader's place and with earnest countenance and tight lips, tried to insert the clip.

Eadie turned and battled his way to the open air again. It was highly improbable that the clip would ever be inserted, as it was a difficult feat for a man possessed with all his faculties, but yet it might slip in and if the raging Ham should haul back the lever—the gun would not function unless he did—but should he—in that case Eadie wished to be away. He had no desire to be a casualty on the *Vin Rouge* front.

Before the barracks was a wagon park, the wheeled transportation pertaining to each battery, being drawn up before its quarters. There was a huge blue wagon with the words in white upon its side, "*Chariot de Parc*," directly before the door, and upon the tongue of this wagon Eadie sat down. The merciless Jake sat down beside him.

"Yuh sure yuh ain't in the wrong outfit?" asked Jake.

"I might think so," said Eadie sadly, "only I know all that gang in there."

SEVERAL men dashed around the corner of the barrack, leaping and prancing, and after them others, who howled and shrieked. One asserted that they were the spirits of defunct whiffempoofs, returned to earth to give ancestral dances. They rushed, shrieking, to a rolling kitchen that glittered in all its newness of black paint, and, dragging it from the line, started it thundering down the slope toward the next barrack, against the wall of which it stopped with a resounding crash.

The clamor in that barrack ceased for a second and then began anew, a hungry hum like an aroused hive. Soldiers poured from it, buzzing with wrath. They streamed from door and window, not in the direction from which the rolling kitchen had come, but downhill and into the next barrack, with the innocent inmates of which they shortly joined in conflict.

Two soldiers on the main roadway stopped suddenly and looked at the disconsolate form of the sergeant, where he sat on the wagon tongue, his head in his hands. They turned and came down toward him.

"Eadie!" cried one, "where the —— did you come from? You're as welcome as the flowers in May! I thought we'd never see you again. Meet Joe Lee, friend of mine from headquarters company."

"——, Frog!" said Eadie, rising and shaking hands. "This lad here is Jake Brown, a new member of the outfit. He and I have been wandering all over France trying to get to this outfit. Well, now we found it we feel like the kid that tried to catch the hornet—and finally did."

"It's kind of a wild night, after all," agreed the Frog. "But this is France, you know, and we all may be dead this time next month. Had any supper?"

"No," said Eadie sadly, "nor any dinner either."

"Come on with us," cried the newcomers, "we're going down to St. Malo and we know a place we can fill you up fine."

"Come on, Jake," said Eadie. "Let's go. Anywhere to get away from this drunken revel."

"St. Malo, ho!" cried the Frog, and the four went away.

They went up through the camp and down past the stables at the back. Beyond the stables was another collection of souvenir booths and open-air kitchens where French fried potatoes were sold, and a little beyond the line of booths was a village, that of St. Malo de Beignon.

It was a real old Breton town. The houses were low and built of rough stone. They had earthen floors and very small windows. There were a number of what seemed to be inns grouped together and on the front wall of each was a collection of wooden boards, cut in the shapes of flaming bombs, similar to the insignia of the ordnance corps in the American army. On these signs were many names, and the words, "Class 1888", or "Class 1902". The names were those of the men belonging to the conscripts of that year who had spent their training period at the camp, and who had frequented that particular inn.

The Frog led the way into one of these, the "Popotte des Maréchaux de Logis," and, addressing himself to one of the buxom lasses that waited on the tables, requested supper. A colloquy ensued, and the Frog announced to the party that there was no room in the interior of the place, but that a cow house across the yard was at their disposal.

Into this they went and, arranging a table, seated on barrels, they awaited the arrival of supper. They were to have an omelette, jelly, bread and butter. An omelette made of Breton eggs, flavored with Breton jelly, is a feast that would make Lucullus leave Rome, and when a man has had nothing to eat all day, it stops but a little short of paradise to be fed upon such food.

"Nice girls they've got here," remarked Jake.

"Won't do you no good," said the Frog. "They got the best lookin' girls to work in these places to draw trade. But when the girls ain't busy, the soldiers can't get out, and when the soldiers can get out, the girls are too busy waiting on table. Have a drink. What'll it be?"

"I don't want anything," said Eadie. "I don't ever want a drink again. Bring me some water."

"Water!" cried the Frog and Joe Lee. "No one drinks water in this country outside a camp. Never do. It kills you."

"Well, let's have a drink then, but make it mild."

"*Quat' anisettes*," said the Frog, when the girl appeared with the bread. The anisettes arrived.

"They're waiting for the hen to lay the eggs for that omelette," remarked Lee after a time. "I'm thirsty, let's have another *anisette*."

"*Encore*," cried the Frog.

Encore was brought. The omelette still lingered.

"I feel better," said Eadie. "By golly, I'm glad I met you fellows. It was depressing as a death in the family to come back and find the outfit in an orgy. We had a tough time to get back, too. We were torpedoed on the way over."

"No!" cried the other two.

Eadie, aided by Jake, recounted the sad tale of the loss of the transport.

"Man, that was a tough time," cried Frog. "It's a wonder you didn't get drowned. You were born to be hung, I always said."

At that moment the omelette arrived.

"Hey, girl," said Jake, "bring us a drink." He held up four fingers. "Nix on these caraway cookies. A real snort of something. Look!"

He gripped his blouse over his stomach and twisted it, at the same time closing his eyes tight and shuddering.

"Good wan, you want!" laughed the girl. "*J'en ai, absolument!*"

They fell on to the omelette and bread. The girl brought four more drinks and they were downed.

"Wow!" cried Eadie. "What's that? Who ordered this extract of barbed wire?"

"That's good stuff," said Lee, wiping his eyes. "It takes hold of a man. Good for you. Kills the germs in your insides."

"Boys," cried Eadie, "I feel fine. I tell you, I'm glad to be back to the outfit. I had a tough time getting here, though. Jake and I were put in the mill for losing our train. I thought we'd never get out."

"Losing your train? How come you lost your train?"

"We got torpedoed! That's why we didn't get here before."

"Now wait," said Jake, "you got that wrong. It wasn't the train we lost, it was the ship. The train got torpedoed. They give us six months apiece for callin' the looey a handcuff volunteer."

"That's right," agreed Eadie. "Jake, correct me if I am wrong. Where did we land, Jake?"

"Weehawken. Bring us some encores. Hey! Four cats!"

"*Encore quat'*," smilingly agreed the buxom female.

"It was my turn to buy!" cried Eadie, when the four next ones arrived. "What do you mean horning in out of your turn?"

"Well, you can buy the next two," said Jake, slipping his arm about the waist of the plump waitress, and trying to kiss her.

She squeaked, and laughing heartily, smote Jake a ringing box on the ear, that toppled him into the refuse on the floor.

"Boy," said Jake, getting up and rubbing his ear, "ain't she a dandy! There was meat behind that pat. My head's goin' 'round like a top!"

More friends of Eadie's arrived, shaking his hand and clapping him on the back. Each one bought, and those at the table bought again.

"Where'd all this money come from?" asked Eadie. "Have I just missed a pay to add to my other troubles?"

"No," said the Frog, "we haven't been paid, because we haven't finished our firing yet. Got one more day's work on the range to do. They wouldn't pay us because they didn't want anything to interfere with the range work. The second battalion finished theirs and they were paid this morning. So we went down and borrowed from them. They were glad enough to loan it to us, you bet, because all the money they don't spend tonight, and they'll spend every cent they got in their clothes, they'll have to spend some other time."

"It's time we went home," said Lee. Indeed it was.

THEY paid for the omelette and incidentals and started to climb the hill back to camp. Eadie noticed that he had a ringing in his ears, a peculiar tingling of his entire body, such as one has in a limb that has been asleep, and is but then awakening.

"Joe," said the Frog, throwing his arm about Lee's neck, "you won't leave me in the midst of these desolate fields, will you? You're the very best friend I've got."

"Frog, you should know me better than that. I wouldn't leave a buddy if the whole Boche army was after me. I feel like a little song. Let's sing one."

A shout from Jake startled the two.

"Lee," said the Frog, "look at that crazy sergeant!"

Now, as the men climbed the hill, they went by a house that was even meaner and dirtier than its fellows. This house was the haunt of the Algerian labor troops, half-bred Moroccans, men with straggling beards and yellow snaggled teeth, and hair that crawled and wriggled it was so alive. One of these men had his face projected from a window and was laughing merrily at the four Americans. To him went the sergeant like an arrow from the bow.

"Who are you laughing at, you black scum?" cried the sergeant.

He snatched a bottle from the Algerian's hand and brought it down with all his might on the other's skull. *Bock!* The Algerian slid from sight with a suddenness that was astonishing. The bottle did not break, being of very heavy glass. Another Algerian, wondering what had caused his comrade so suddenly to measure his length on the floor, thrust an inquiring head from the window. *Bam!* He joined his recumbent comrade.

"*Yiyiyi!*" cried all the other Algerians, and three of them tried to get at Eadie through the window.

Eadie beat upon them as one does who plays a xylophone, and they took in their heads again. At this moment Jake arrived.

"Hey, sergeant, lay off," he cried. "Nix, come away."

Eadie collapsed. Too much exertion is always fatal in such cases. Jake bent over and gathered him up as if he were a child. The Algerians piped shrilly, but they were not many and they are indeed a spineless race, so they confined their retaliation to curses that Jake did not understand. Jake started away with the limp body of the sergeant. Eadie's feeble hand caught hold

of a fist full of Jake's red hair, which was long and flowing, where it grew at all.

"Cutie," murmured the sergeant. "You needn't hug *me*. I haven't got a sou to my name."

Lee and the Frog observed.

"Eadie's passed out!" said Lee.

"Is that so?" howled the Frog. "Well, no gold brickin' —— from headquarters is going to say that an 'A' battery man can't carry his pack!"

The Frog leaped at Lee's throat, knocking the other down. Lee's fall was so sudden and complete that the Frog fell over him, and landed some distance away. When he had with difficulty got to his feet, he beheld Lee recumbent. So sudden had been the other's lapse into unconsciousness that he had not known what had struck him.

"Gimme that sergeant," howled the Frog, "I'm going to take him home! No John gets away with anything here!"

He went at Jake with foam flying, but Jake, disdaining to lay down the sergeant, lifted one leg and placing his foot in the Frog's chest, hurled him backward, so that he tripped over the body of Lee, and fell into the ditch beside the road, where nothing was visible of him but his knees and lower legs.

"Home, James," announced Jake. "If I knuckle under now, I'll never call myself a man again."

So he went home to the barracks, and when he found two empty cots he laid the sergeant upon one, and himself upon the other, and knew no more until reveille.

AFTER breakfast and before drill is the hour when the battery commander goes to the orderly room, or battery office, signs the reports, outlines the day's work, reads the orders and circulars and hears the alibis of the delinquents.

In "A" battery's orderly room, Sergeant Eadie sat upon the first sergeant's cot, waiting to report to the battery commander for assignment. The sergeant's stock was low. The formation at reveille had been one full of gloom as morning-after formations always were. The breakfast had been poor, the bacon raw and greasy, the coffee like concentrated lye and a fearful sour mess had been passed from the pans to the mess-kits to the garbage cans, which the mess sergeant claimed to be fried potatoes, and which the cursing artilleryman assured him was fit only for fertilizer.

In addition, the first sergeant had detailed Eadie for stable guard that very night, a thing not within the canons of military etiquette, for a man is not supposed to be detailed for duty until he has been with an outfit at least twenty-four hours. The sergeant therefore was in poor spirits.

"When I think," he muttered, "of all I went through to get back to this dizzy battery, when I might have saved myself all the trouble and had another start in a new outfit! It might have been better. It certainly couldn't have been any worse."

He had also some apprehension regarding Jake's fate. Jake had gone, upon advice of some of Eadie's friends, to report to the regimental adjutant. From this duty he had not returned. The first sergeant worked at his desk, the clerk worked at his, and Eadie wondered why he himself was allowed to be at large without a keeper.

The door opened and the three men in the orderly room sprang to their feet. The captain entered, pulling off his gloves.

"Good morning," he said. "Good morning, sergeant," shaking hands with Eadie. "I'm glad to see you with us again. Hear you had a rough voyage. I was in headquarters when your red-headed friend reported. By the way, he was assigned to the supply company. He said he could skin mules and they needed drivers. The little matter of being a deserter was overlooked." The Old Man winked a wink. "How does the outfit look?" he asked.

"Well, sir," said Eadie, "it has changed a bit since I left it."

The Old Man grinned behind his hand.

"You weren't drunk were you, last night?"

"Yessir, I was," said Eadie, reddening. "It seems to be the custom here. But that stuff has you before you know it."

"Makes men beat up inoffensive labor troops, I hear," said the captain. "Well, we allowed the boys a little license last night. This isn't the usual thing by any means. Once perhaps in a lifetime." He paused for emphasis. "We're going up to the front tomorrow."

NOW in the presence of his battery commander one does not leap into the air with howls, nor does one go into raptures, no matter how agreeable the news.

Eadie therefore stood mute, but his eyes shone like searchlights. Tomorrow! The front! Another day and he would have missed the regiment!

"Sir," said Eadie earnestly. "I wonder if the captain could lend me a few francs? I haven't been paid for three months."

With no comment the captain produced a roll and tendered Eadie some pink crackly paper therefrom.

"Thank you, sir," said Eadie. "You see, last night I didn't know what I was celebrating, and then, as you say, it's only once in a lifetime."

THE TWO JIMS AND THE BEARS

***by* Sidney E. Johnson**

THAT Jim Bridger was given to foolhardy exploits at all times, but especially when gone in liquor, we have Hough's "The Covered Wagon" and other reliable testimony to witness. But it is improbable that in all their careers neither he nor his friend, Jim Baker, ever attempted a more foolhardy venture than when they staged their famous battle with the grizzly cubs—and so far as can be learned both were sober at the time.

It is Baker's story, and he told it often to my grandfather, from whom I got it. He and Bridger were one day setting traps on the headwaters of the Grand River when they came upon two young grizzly bears as large as Newfoundland dogs.

Baker proposed that they kill and scalp these cubs with their hunting knives alone, and have a real feat to boast of. Accordingly they laid aside their rifles, each chose a bear and they waded in, no more ready for the fray, however, than the cubs themselves.

For a while, Baker said, it was a case of sparring for an opening. Each man circled round his bear, seeking a chance to run in and deal a death thrust; but the wary cubs stood on their hind legs and kept their fronts turned to their adversaries, snarling and striking out with extraordinary swiftness.

Baker said he realized at once that "he'd tackled a heap sight more fout than what he'd reckoned on;" and he quickly grew apprehensive of the coming of the cub's mother—a contingency which, hampered as the two men were, would likely have put an end to the fight and also to the West's two most seasoned pioneers.

Baker made several tentative attacks, slashed the cub's paws a few times and finally angered the animal so that it took the offensive. Man and beast closed. Baker's arms and legs were soon clawed almost to the bone, his clothes were torn to shreds and it was all he could do to avoid being slashed in the vitals. But after a terrific battle he succeeded in driving his knife to a vital spot. And so he laid out *his* bear.

But Bridger was in a worse predicament than the one from which Baker had just extricated himself. His scratches were more severe, and he was so weakened from loss of blood that he could scarcely fend off the bear.

He begged the other to come to his aid; and although Baker said he felt "it warn't none o' his business to meddle with another man's b'ar fout," he went in. Whereupon Bridger immediately retired from the contest.

Desperately Baker fought. Vainly he implored Bridger to come in and end it either by shooting or stabbing the cub.

"Go ahead, Jim," said the panting Bridger. "Yo' kin kill him an' sculp him yo'self."

Baker, after a fight which tried him to the utmost, finally killed the second cub; and then each man rested and bound up the other's wounds and was glad, rifle in hand, to seek shade and water.

Finally Baker demanded an explanation of Bridger's conduct.

"Why, Jim, yo' 'tarnal fool," said Bridger, "yo' wanted to kill an' sculp b'ars with butcher-knives an' I really wanted to git 'em with guns. Yo' got us into ther —— —— scrape, so I jest thort I'd 'low ye to hendle ther big end o' it!"

Baker reflected a moment.

"By gumbo whizz, yo're right, Jim!" he said. "An' I'll never fight nary other grizzly less'n I've got a good shootin' iron in my paws!"

I guess he never did.

PEASANT WIT

by Nevil Henshaw

Author of "Come Home to Roost," "The Papa Man," etc.

WITH the first frantic yapping of Blue, the watch-dog, Madame Borel ceased her spinning. As she rose, laying the soft yellow mass of nankeen cotton upon her wheel, the sharp sound of a shot whacked in from the prairie. Following Blue's agonized yelp came his last futile growl of defiance. Then two more shots and silence.

Madame Borel swiftly crossed herself as she made for the door in the rear. Before passing through it she spoke to her child, a tot of four who, in a effort to follow, had already half scrambled from her place on the floor.

"Go on with your play, Adita," said she. "*Maman* has no time for you."

Which was true indeed; for in those days of the early Seventies, a shot meant much upon the prairie. The war had been kind to that particular corner of Louisiana. Its rumblings had been faint and far away. Then, with peace and the reconstruction, had come disaster.

All at once the inhabitants had found themselves beneath the rule of a relentless horde of carpet-baggers. Tyranny and corruption walked hand in hand. In the end, their patience gone, the more daring ones in the parish had formed a *Comité de Vigilance*. In one week it had swept the oppressors away.

Driven from their offices at the parish seat of Mouton, the corrupt officials had taken refuge in the cypress islands of the sea marsh. Here they had been joined by others, deserters, camp-idlers, the unsettled dregs of a vanished war. And here they had become frank outlaws, searing the country around as with a tongue of flame.

Aghast, the Vigilantes found that their work had but just begun. Soon their membership embraced all true men of the Parish. Thus warfare returned, mimic yet deadly.

It was a time of dread, of terror. Always the outlaws were riding forth. Always the Vigilantes were driving them back again. From town to sea marsh each mile was a potential battlefield. And half way between, in the midst of it all, stood the circle of china trees that made of Madame Borel's place a little island.

Only that morning there had been a fight. Madame Borel had heard the firing, far off toward Moulton and the west. And now those three shots in the late afternoon. Truely she had no time for the little Adita.

Outside Madame Borel gave a look at the sun. It was well down—two hours, perhaps, before dark. Hurrying off, she made for the gray huddle of outbuildings that cluttered the rear of her island.

When she returned a moment later, her look was serene. She had done what she could, at once, and to the best of her ability. The rest was with *le bon Dieu*.

Reentering the house, she went back to her spinning wheel. Again the threads span out beneath her busy fingers. To have seen her one would have thought that she had merely gone out on some trifling errand.

Yet her brain was busy. A raid? A straggler? A wanton firing to terrify her? It might be anything. Perhaps it was the

great "Sauvage" himself—leader of the outlaws. Or his lieutenant, the "Wolf."

Le Sauvage would not be so bad. Brilliant, reckless, he was often generous to his enemies. But the Wolf! He was all that his name implied—a fabulous creature, bitter, cynical, cruel as death itself.

With the thought Madame Borel glanced down to where her little one still played upon the floor. For just a moment there was panic in her look. After all she was a young woman, scarce well into her twenties. But responsibility had brought her the gift of years. They must find her calm, courageous. That was the principal thing.

But this waiting. Each moment was like a year. When at last there came a rustle outside, Madame Borel's sigh was almost one of relief.

The thump from the porch found her tense and ready.

"Quiet, Adita," she murmured.

Her gaze went straight to the doorway and stayed there until the looked-for figure appeared.

It was a tall figure, gaunt and menacing, the shoulders hunched curiously to ease a dangling left leg. One hand thrust forward a heavy revolver. The other gripped, hard to a half-rotted fence paling which, held beneath the left armpit, did duty as a crutch.

This much Madame Borel caught in a look that went instantly beyond. No, there were no other figures. The man was alone. Her gaze returned to study the intruder's face.

There was no mistaking the face. Gray, venomous, it was like a mirror of hatred. Peer into it as you would, hate stared back at you, deliberately and deadly.

As she rose from her wheel, Madame Borel's breath caught in a little gasp. The child, half-frightened, half-curious, scrambled forward to clutch at her skirt. Though her hand went down in a gesture of soothing her eyes did not waver.

"Well, m'sieu?" questioned Madame Borel, and awaited the demands of the Wolf.

THE Wolf had had a bad day of it. Shot from the saddle in the fight that morning, he had taken refuge among the flags and rushes of a coulée. Later, finding the length of paling, he had set off across the prairie toward the vague, gray blot that marked the nearest china tree island.

Thanks to a running fight he had been almost without ammunition. But four shots remained to him. A desperate chance yet his only one. Should he find a horse, he could still escape to the sea marsh and safety. This he must do before sunset, when the Vigilantes of the prairie would be riding home again.

It had been hard, that slow, hobbling journey to the island. And, at its edge, he had encountered Blue, the watch-dog. Three of the precious shots had gone to quell his fierceness.

Thus, as he stood in the doorway, the Wolf was not pleasant to see. For the moment his cold malignancy was warmed by a glow of resentment. His eyes went first to the wall above the open fireplace. The crude gun-rest, made of forked sticks, thrust forward emptily. Nor did a further look reveal the weapon in the sparsely furnished room.

So much for that. Yet he would make sure. He turned savagely on Madame Borel.

"You are alone here?"

"Yes, m'sieu."

"Your husband?"

"He is gone?"

"With the Vigilantes?"

"I only know that he is not here."

"Get me a horse then—and quickly."

"The horse is gone also, m'sieu."

The Wolf moved forward, his face like a fiend's.

"If you are lying to me—" he threatened as he hobbled toward the door in the rear.

"I do not lie, m'sieu," answered Madame Borel.

A look outside was enough. The small stable stood empty with open door. There was no corral. To the Wolf the situation was plain. One horse, and the husband had it. One shot with which to take it away from him. It was a problem.

Propped on his paling, the Wolf considered it. In the end he thumped back again to drop down upon the nearest chair. There was still some time before sunset. And he was wounded and hungry. Once refreshed, he would be the better able to plan. Again he turned to Madame Borel. He spoke quietly now, yet with deadly purpose.

"You know who I am?" he questioned.

Madame Borel replied with a question in turn.

"You are the one that is called the Wolf?"

"You have said it. Now attend, madame. First water and bandages. Then some food. If you are slow about it, you may know my methods as well as my name."

All this time Madame Borel had stood motionless, half-anchored by the clutch of the round-eyed child upon the floor. Now, with a muttered word, she loosened the little one's hold and set briskly about the outlaw's demands. Hot water simmered upon the open fire. This she brought, together with a roll of cotton rags. Already the Wolf had cut away the blood-stiffened cloth of his trouser leg. The wound—a clean hole through the calf—showed angry and red.

Swiftly, deftly, Madame Borel swabbed and bandaged, winding the cloth with a practised hand. When she had done she set food upon the table, *boulettes*, the beef-balls of the prairie, some greens, the inevitable coffee. And all without a word, while the child watched curiously from the corner to which she had withdrawn.

As he bolted the meal, the Wolf was watchful. Eyes and ears were ever upon the alert. On the table beside him the big revolver lay cocked and ready to his hand.

Having finished, he felt easier. The pain of his wound was lessened, his hunger was gone. Yet with relief came no slightest sense of gratitude. That was his way. Hatred, bitterness—he knew no other emotions.

Once he had held high place in the land. Now, from his low estate, he turned the venom of his soul upon those who had cast him down. Men, women, children, he loathed his humble opponents. They were boors, clods, no better than the beasts with which they herded. His quick crooked brain despised their slow mentality.

Thus the Wolf appraised Madame Borel as, his eating over, she silently cleared the table. A fine creature to look at, young, strong, ruggedly handsome. And with the brains of a cow.

Her present occupation for example. One finer strung, in such a predicament, would have let the dishes lie. Dumb habit, of course—the unquestioning routine of the animal.

Well, so much the better for him. He was practised in dealing with fools. But his case was still desperate, his problem unsolved. At once he fastened upon it with the full strength of his agile mind.

No need to question the woman further. She would be the same with her servile "m'sieu," her blundering evasions, her stupid replies. She had tried to deceive him, eh? She, with her brain of a cow.

Suppose he had his try at stirring this brain. It could be done. It might even be made profitable as well as amusing. With the thought came inspiration. All at once the Wolf's desire joined with his necessity as neatly as a knife with its sheath.

When a moment later he turned to Madame Borel, his tone was curiously soft and wheedling.

"See, madame," he began. "Let us understand one another. Your husband is gone, you say. He will be back at sunset?"

Her duties performed, Madame Borel had gone to the child in the corner. Tricked by the outlaw's tone, she looked up hopefully.

"My husband?" she answered. "No, m'sieu, he will not be back at sunset."

"So," said the Wolf, and waited a moment. Then, "Peasant wit!" he exploded.

Madame Borel stared at him.

"Pardon," she muttered, bewildered.

There was little time, for the sun was all but down. Yet the Wolf made the most of it. Such things were as meat and drink to his hatred.

"Peasant wit," he repeated fiercely. "Your wit—the wit of your people. You are not clever, madame. You do not even lie well. Before I have asked you things. Now, through what I have seen and heard, I am going to tell you the truth of them.

"Your husband is off in town with the Vigilantes. By dark he will be home again. You would have him surprize me. But this will not be. I shall do the surprizing myself."

He paused, relishing the brief delay.

"That is, if you decide to have it so," he finished smoothly. Madame Borel continued to stare at him.

"If—if I decide?" she repeated helplessly.

"Just so," said the Wolf, and as he went on he spaced his words with the care, the nicety of one approaching a final spring.

"But I will show you the situation. For the moment I am a prisoner here on your island. With a horse I will be free again. Your husband will ride in armed. Should

he be warned, I must take my chance with him. I do not wish to take this chance.

"I could shoot you and settle the matter. But I will not do this. Instead I will leave it to your decision. You have a child there. I will take it out with me behind the shelter of the stable. When your husband arrives we will be waiting for him. I will not miss—rest assured of that. I am a good shot, and I will wait for point-blank range.

"The rest I leave to you. Call out if you wish. Give your husband his chance. I will make no attempt to prevent you. But in that event I will first shoot the child. What follows will be my affair. I ask only your judgment upon that first shot."

He halted a moment that his words might sink in, and summed up calmly:

"You see? It is very simple. Husband or child—I leave it for you to say. At least you must lose one of them. Your choice will be interesting."

Madame Borel did not reply at once. For a space she seemed lost in thought. True, she snatched the child to her arms, but the action was wholly subconscious. In the end she spoke with the same quiet earnestness as before. Nothing, it seemed could break the calm with which she had armored herself.

"M'sieu," said she, "I can not believe you. I have heard of you—I know what you are. But you will not do this, you can not do it. It is too much."

The Wolf smiled — a harsh, mirthless smile that twisted his thin lips wryly.

"Madame," said he, "you are hard to convince. I see that I must abandon words for deeds."

Seizing his revolver, he rose from the chair. Having balanced himself, he reached for his paling.

"Come," he ordered, when this was adjusted. "We are off to the stable. Bring the child or give it to me. Again I offer you your choice. Only you must make it quickly. I have no time to lose."

Without further protest Madame Borel moved forward, the child in her arms. The Wolf nodded a sardonic approval.

"That is better," he observed. "Yet, in the coming affair, I should give you a word of advice. It will be far easier to make a mistake than to repair one."

By now Madame Borel was abreast of him, and he paused to bow mockingly.

"After you, madame," said he. "At least we will observe the proprieties. And remember—no tricks. I shall be just behind you."

In proof of his words he followed her out, his revolver covering the generous breadth between her shoulders.

ARRIVED at the stable, the Wolf looked about him, planning his attack. It was small, this island. The house, the out-buildings, were hemmed in closely by the bushy circle of china trees. To the west, a gap in these trees gave entrance upon the prairie. And from this gap a hard-beaten path led straight to the stable door.

An easy ambush. Swinging forward the door, the Wolf motioned Madame Borel in behind it. Following her, he steadied himself and waited. He was silent now, his mockery gone, his every sense concentrated upon that fast-darkening gap in the trees.

Tensely the Wolf awaited his warning. It must come soon now from the vast, silent sweep of the prairie. Waiting also, Madame Borel soothed the half-sleeping child. Once she glanced quickly through the crack of the door at the dark inside of the stable. If he saw her, the Wolf paid no heed.

Ten minutes more and the farmyard was still. It was dusk now, the dim, misty dusk of the prairie. Hobbling out, the Wolf stationed himself at the edge of the door. At all events he must see. And the horseman would ride from the open into the gloom of the trees. It was still a good ambush. But not for long. Would the other never come?

Swiftly the grayness thickened. It was almost dark. Now Madame Borel strained forward. Like the Wolf, she was tense, expectant. For the moment her calm was all gone.

Then, from outside on the prairie, came the long-waited sound—a thudding of hoofs on short grass.

Without turning, the Wolf gave his order.

"The child here, beside me," said he.

The moment had come; nor did Madame Borel hesitate. At once she set the little child down, silencing her half-sleepy whimper with a touch and a word.

"Be still, Adita," she murmured. "You must not make a sound."

And she added quite steadily an instant later:

"Nor will I, m'sieu. Spare the child."

"So," said the Wolf, speaking into the dusk. "It is as I would have it, madame. Thus, since we both are satisfied——"

He broke off, moving back a step, so that his small hostage was before him within instant aim. As if to make sure, he lowered his weapon.

"No tricks," he growled as he raised it again.

"Trust me," muttered Madame Borel.

She still spoke calmly, though her nails bit deep in her palms.

For an age-long moment the two waited motionless. Then, with a swish and a clatter, a horse trotted in through the gap in the trees.

What followed was a matter of seconds. Finger on trigger, the Wolf stared desperately. But the shadows were tricky. Try as he would he could see but little. The horse, a vague bulk, bore straight down upon him. As for its rider——

Now there was a glimpse of the animal's head. For a flash it was sharply outlined. The man must be just beyond. Up went his arm. Should he chance it? There was not a moment to lose.

"Shoot!" cried a voice and, his tension snapping, the Wolf obeyed unconsciously. Swifter than thought his finger pulled back on the trigger.

With the roar of the shot came a cry from the child, a gasp, a snort, the pound of retreating hoof-beats. Half-unbalanced by the heavy discharge, the Wolf swung back on his paling. Then, as he sought to steady himself, a blow from behind sent him sprawling.

Scarce was he down before, with a twist and a shove, he was struggling up again. But his paling was gone, his bad leg crumpled beneath him. Rolling over, he tried for a better purchase, squirming and snarling until at last he managed to sit upright. And there, waiting for him, was Madame Borel—big, determined, a pitchfork held spearlike in her capable hands.

"No more," she cried. "Be still, or I drive this through you."

By way of reply the Wolf snatched his revolver. Madame Borel allowed him to aim it before she spoke again.

"Shoot—if you can," she mocked.

And she went on, her words pouring forth through sudden reaction: "'Peasant wit,' M'sieu Wolf. Did you think that I was blind when I placed your meal, as I cleared the table? Your pistol lay in plain view. No bullets showed in the chambers. I wondered why you did not reload.

"Then, when you made me your offer, I knew. A man who would kill a little child would not spare the mother. The cause of your mercy was plain."

She paused to sweep on with a scorn that was as sharp as the prongs of her homely weapon:

"Yet you might well have used that one shot upon me. My husband will not ride home as I said. He is dead—killed by your men. My choice was no choice at all.

"As for the horse, he was at graze on the prairie. Each night he returns to his stable. Had you waited you would have been free. But you must needs torture a helpless woman.

"That gave me my plan. I was not afraid. It all depended on old Canelle, the horse. If he came in the light, showing that he was alone, I knew that you would ride away, saving your shot for the journey. If he came in the dark I would make you shoot, and be ready for you."

She halted, her calmness returning, and finished quietly:

"It has been as I wished. I am lonely here. And there is a price on your head. The money will help me to go away. I will claim it when the men come from town."

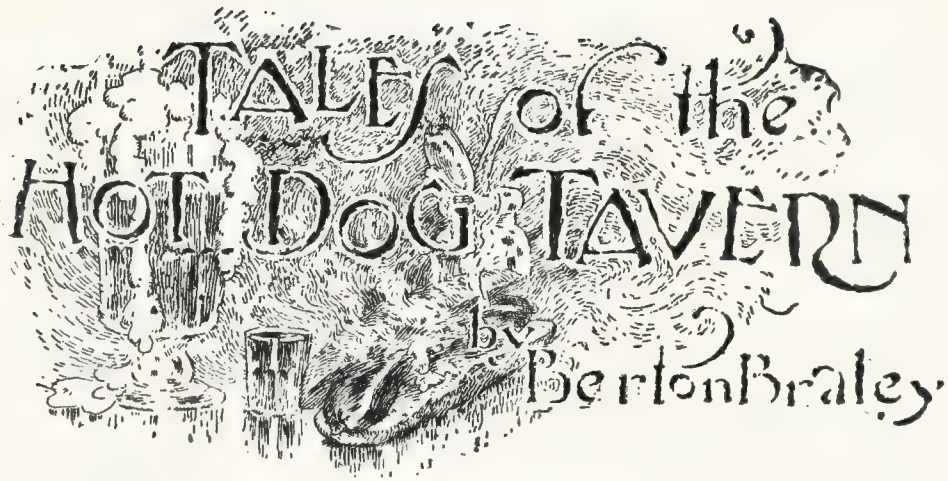
With an oath the Wolf lunged forward, only to draw back from the steady points of steel.

"You lie," he snarled. "There has been no warning."

Madame Borel smiled derisively.

"You think not?" said she. "Then listen. When my husband died, they gave me a pigeon marked with the name of this *île*. If trouble came I was to set it free. They will be here soon, never fear. And all through that little bird. 'Peasant wit' again. Can you laugh at it now, M'sieu Wolf?"

But the Wolf said nothing. Helpless, silenced, he awaited the coming of the Vigilantes.



Author of "The Exile," "The Gentlemen Adventurers," etc.

IN WET and lushful days when lager flowed
At countless bars, and when the bottles glowed
Red, brown and golden, every size and form
Against the mirrors, spirits that could warm
The heart to comfort and the dullest eye
To sparkling joy—in those brave days gone by,
Among the ship-yards and the boiler-works,
Where evermore a pall of coal-smoke lurks,
There stood the Hot Dog Tavern.
Dingy, gray
With dust and soot that sifted, night and day,
Upon its battered front, it nonetheless
Had something of a pleasant homeliness
To hard-thewed workers, streaked with grime and sweat,
Whose dry and dusty throats would fain be wet
With nectar that the Hot Dog Tavern sold.
At noon or quitting-time these patrons rolled
Into the tavern, past the swinging door,
And, scuffling through the saw-dust on the floor,
Lined the old bar, their feet upon the rail;
Greeted old Bill the Barkeep with a hail
Of "Whaddy'uh know, Bill?"; made their money clink
Upon the board, and loudly ordered drink.
The boiler-makers had a special shot
They called a "John O'Farrell": it was not
A tipple meant for weaklings—whisky first,
A glassful sizzling down their throats athirst,
And then a mighty schooner, brimmed with beer
To chase the spirits. Thereupon you'd hear
The chorused "ahs" of satisfaction pass
Like puffs of wind, as each set down his glass.

"Say, Bill," one boiler-maker voiced his thought,
"I guess the total of these drinks I've bought

"*Tales of the Hot Dog Tavern*," *copyright, 1924, by Berton Braley.*

Would fill a bunch of beer and whisky barrels,
But I don't know who named 'em John O'Farrells.
I wonder if you *savvy* how they came
To hand this combination such a name?"

Bill wiped his bar and smiled. "Why, sure," he said,
"I know the story."
"Well then, fire ahead,"
The boiler-maker urged him, adding, "I
Will stand the drinks for any one who's dry
And one for you, Bill, or say two or three,
If you'll just hand that story on to me."
Bill drew the drinks as ordered, then began
His chronicle, and this is how it ran:

"Big John O'Farrell was sick and in peril
Of losin' his hold upon life;
His moanin' so shocked her, she sent for the doctor.
(By she I refer to his wife.)
The doctor says: 'John, you'll be lyin' here dead
Unless you stop drinkin' the booze when it's red,
So gimme that flask that you've hid in your bed
Or, blooie! you're done with the strife,
The joy an' the sorrow of life.'

"Says Big John O'Farrell: 'The song that you carol
Ain't music at all in my ear;
If I can't have whisky to make me feel frisky
I'm just as well buried as here.'
'But think of your family, John,' says the doc,
'Your wife would be sufferin' much from the shock,
So if you'll drop whisky I'll let you have bock
Or some other species of beer,
That ought to be givin' you cheer!'

"Says Big John O'Farrell: 'The lager, I swear'll
Be pretty weak drinkin' for me,
But sure if the liquor is makin' me sicker
I guess I will have to agree;
For if as a surgeon you cut out me booze
I haven't the strength in me sowl to refuse,
Though sure it's a bosom companion I lose,

But—go on an' take it,' says he,
'Though sorry I am it must be.'

"Well, Big John O'Farrell escaped from his peril
An'—went back to booze that was red,
But after each drink of the whisky he'd think of
The words that the doctor had said,
'Me stomach,' John sighed, 'is demandin' the rye,
Me conscience says beer, and I'm driven to try
To satisfy both, so it's two drinks I buy
Where one used to do me instead,
Before I was sick in me bed.'

"And that is the carol of Big John O'Farrell
Who chased every whisky with beer,
And that's why his name is so well known and famous
The way that it is around here,
So draw up the whisky an' beer by the barrel
And drink John O'Farrells to Big John O'Farrell."

Laughter resounded when the tale was done;
Many a coin upon the counter spun.
Bill filled the glasses which were heard to clink
To John O'Farrell, patron of a drink
Combined of liquid flame, and followed then
By frothing beer to put it out again.

Meantime old Joseph, silent, bent and drab,
Busied himself behind the marble slab
Whereon from noon to midnight, year to year,
His "Hot Dogs" broiled, and filled the atmosphere
With rich aroma. It was Joseph's fare
Which he watched over with such loving care,
That helped to give the Hot Dog Tavern fame
Or local reputation—and a name.
Old Joseph's counter had no china fine,
No silverware of delicate design;
Nothing at all, in fact, except the squat
And quite utilitarian mustard pot,
From which one dipped the contents, smooth and thick,
And swabbed it on his sausage with a stick.
But when for eight long hours you've held a hammer
Against the rivet-ends in all the clamor
Of boiler-shop or ship-yard; when you stand
With tongs grasped firmly in your skilful hand
And toss red rivets through the circling air
To crews that swarm about you everywhere,
You're not meticulous, for you will gain
A hunger that treats nothing with disdain;
And fare like Joseph's, savory and hot,
Goes quite precisely to the proper spot.

Thus from the time the quitting-whistle blew
Until the Hot Dog closed, there was a crew
Of hungry workmen clustered near the slab
Where Joseph stood; and avidly they'd grab

His fat hot dogs that nestled in a roll
Of such a size that, taken as a whole,
'Twould make a meal for lesser men than these.
Now other places might do what they please
In boosting prices, but however fickle
The butcher's rates, old Joseph, for a nickle
Still served a dog. He was no profiteer,
He owned a conscience and he kept it clear.

The truth is that this ancient sausage fryer,
Who seemed to have no thoughts or visions higher
Than dogs, more dogs, and still more dogs to fry,
Had "got religion" in the days gone by,
And sometimes, in the dull mid-afternoon,
If you had wandered to this old saloon
And caught old Joseph in the mood for speech,
You might have heard the way he came to reach
The narrow path, a tale he'd sometimes trace
When trade was slack and few were in the place.

"When I was just a gay young buck, I piloted a heavy truck
Around the crowded thoroughfares throughout the noisy city;
My horses were a bully team with lots of vigor, pep and steam,
The way they snatched that truck along was something very pretty.
But I was always stirred to wrath by other trucks that blocked my path,
By traffic cops and trolley-cars and thronging population
That stopped my progress here and there, and that is how I came to swear
With words that made the people stare in awe and admiration.

"But then arrived a day in life when I took Mary Ann to wife,
And when she overheard me curse it certainly upset her.
Says she to me: 'I'm shocked to hear the way you use your tongue, my dear,
I thought a noble man like you would know a whole lot better;
But now I find you swear and curse as bad as sailors do, or worse;
And when you drive it seems to me your oaths are never slackened.
Oh, pause a little on your way and think about the Judgment Day
And how your record up above with curses will be blackened!

"You know, I'd never thought of that, and when she put it to me, flat,
I promised her that I'd reform, forever and forever.
I kept my promise well, at home, but when upon my truck I'd roam,
My tongue would get away from me in spite of my endeavor.
For when the traffic had me stalled and other drivers yelled and bawled
A string of purple oaths at me, I rapidly unloaded
A line of language mighty quick with curses long and wide and thick;
For if I'd kept 'em bottled up I would have plumb exploded.

"I turned things over in my brain; and then I saw my course was plain:
I couldn't drive and keep my vow—that's straight and on the level.
From which you'll see quite plainly how I took the job I'm holding now,
Where cops and trucks and trolley-cars won't wake my sleeping devil.
I might have had a place that's swell, a waiter in a fine hotel,
But I preferred this roughneck joint where I could soothe my spirit
By hearin' others get away with things I've promised not to say.
I never use such language, but it warms my heart to hear it."

This is no epic to John Barleycorn,
Nor any valedictory forlorn
To alcohol. I do not seek to rend
Your hearts with lamentations for a friend
Who, take it all in all, was mostly false.
I am no bard who splendidly exalts
The creed of Bacchus, or who sings of Booze
As glorious nectar we should weep to lose.
He gave us moments that were purest gold,
But made us pay for them a thousandfold,
And when you foot the total that he lost us,
His favors were not worth the price they cost us.
Yet when, at times, we chance to reminisce
We can recall some hours we'd hate to miss—
Hours that were spent at tables or at bars
Discussing Venus or extolling Mars,
With something more than ginger ale to sip
And give a tingle to the throat and lip.
So when I sing the Hot Dog Tavern's praise,
I do it in remembrance of the days
When such a place was found on every street,
A sort of center where mankind could meet
Upon one level; and I do not fret
With either moralizing or regret
But tune my lyre, and chronicle in song
Something that will be history, ere long.
Now to my tale, I pray you pardon me
For this digression of philosophy.

Wherever men foregather, night or noon,
For social talk or drink, you find them soon
Demanding song, and if there chance to be
A member of the merry company
With skill to lead a chant, or bang the keys
To coax a tune from out the ivories,
He will be king of revels. There was one
Who guided thus the Hot Dog Tavern's fun.
He was a checker in the yards, his hands

Were slim and soft, not hardened with demands
Of rougher work, and at his finger-ends
Was subtle magic of the sort that lends
To any battered keyboard, anywhere,
A true enchantment. He could play an air
You whistled once, and then elaborate it,
Trick it and rag it, change and re-create it
Until it wrapped you in a perfect spell.
Yet, like so many men who play right well,
He'd never learned to read a single note.
And there was music also in his throat,
Barber shop tenor, technically wrong,
That still could snatch your heart-strings with a song.
One night he sat him down upon the stool
A lager beer beside him, foaming, cool,
Struck a deep chord and gave a joyous shout,
"I've got a new one, boys, let's try it out."
And when the gang had gathered close to him,
This was the song he hammered out with vim:

"You may talk about wine that's sparkling
And food that is rich and rare,
But here at the Hot Dog Tavern
Is what I call proper fare;
To hell with the joints so fancy;
I'd rather be loafing here
With a dog from old Joseph's corner
And some of Bill's lager beer."

"Now here's the chorus, boys," the checker said,
"Let's make it rumble forth to wake the dead,
The legion of good fellows gone before us
May come to life if we boom out the chorus!"
And after he had played and sung it, then
The tavern rang and rang and rang again
With roaring voices of the gathered gang,
Clashing their steins and glasses as they sang:

"Give us a dog and a beer,
Then give us more of the same;
We brought our appetites here;
We brought our thirst when we came;
Now we are idle it's time for a seidel;
Where can you find better cheer?
We slap down our chink for some real food and drink:
A roll and a dog and a beer!
A dog and a roll
Are good for the soul
But best of the lot is the beer!

"Now," said the checker, "here's the second spasm."
Again he sang, amid enthusiam:

"Oh, the chefs may be great at cooking
In swellest hotel or club,
But me for the Hot Dog Tavern

Where Joseph deals out the grub.
The dogs that are rich with mustard,
The rolls that are thick and fine,
And a pint of good old lager
That's served in a portly stein."

A huge, deep-chested riveter, whose throat
Gave forth a rich reverberatory note
That sounded like the clanging of a sledge
Upon a boiler, loitered at the edge
Of that glad group which bellowed out the song.
"Say, boys," he rumbled to the jolly throng,
"That stuff's all right; I like the way it sounds,
And this here guy's a wonder when he pounds
The keyboard; but I'd kinda like to say,
That while it's fine to sing about our play
I wouldn't mind a little note or two
That celebrates the daily work we do,
Puttin' the ships together in the yard."
The checker swung about: "You said it, pard,
There ought to be a bully song in that,
Maybe you've got it underneath your hat.
Gimme me the key, I'll follow you, old scout,
Tune up your pipes and let the music out."
"Aw, I can't sing," the riveter denied.
"I know you can," the pianist replied,
"I heard you thundering that song of mine,
You've got a basso that is superfine;
Come on, now; shoot! I'm waiting for you, bo,
Step up here by me. Now then, let'er go!"
The riveter obeyed and through the room
His mighty accents seemed to roll and boom:

"Must the poets always sing of the little birds in spring
And of lovers who are sighing for the moon?
Can't they carol now and then of the daily work of men

Where the hammers beat a syncopated tune?
Can't they make a chanty loud of the common workin'-crowd
That is bangin' on the plates and on the keel?
Say, it oughta be sublime if they'd make a song to rime
With the yammer of the hammer on the steel!

"Oh the yam-yam-yammer
And the clam-clam-clamor
Of the old air-hammer
Is a song that's real;
As we jam-jam-jam her
And we slam-slam-slam her
On the red-hot rivets in the plates and keel.
So I'm sing-sing-singing
Of the ring-ring-ringing
Of the ham-ham-hammer on the steel, steel, steel,
There's a glam-glam-glamour
To the yam-yam-yammer
Of the ham-ham-hammer on the steel!

"As we labor in the yard we're a gang that's rough and hard,
But we got a kind of vision just the same;
For we're buildin' ships to sail on the open ocean trail
And we build 'em strong and sturdy, hull and frame.
So I makes my little song just to pass the word along
And to tell the poet fellers how we feel:
That there's music loud and clear if they'll only stop to hear,
In the yammer of the hammer on the steel!"

The singer filled his lungs and then began
The second chorus. Promptly every man
Joined with him, and the Hot Dog Tavern trembled
With thunder of the voices thus assembled;
They roared it thrice and then they shouted "More!"
They stamped its rhythm on the sawdust floor.
When finally the roar of voices died,
"You've sung of buildin' ships," a sailor cried,
"An' sung about it with a lot o' pride;
Me, I don't blame you—it's a bully job
For any feller in the workin' mob
To have a hand in makin' ships to sail
Over the ocean, battlin' with the gale
From port to port, an' carryin' their load
Of food an' coal an' folks upon the road
Acrost the seas. You build 'em tight an' stout
But when it comes the time to send 'em out
To open sea—well, then our labor starts.
Us sailor men, an' in our rovin' hearts
There's somethin' sort of sings to feel once more
The smooth decks heavin' as we leave the shore;
The engines throbbin' an' the keen, salt breeze
Bringing its message from the seven seas.
What if we kicks an' grumbles, just the same
The sea's the Sea, a hard an' cruel dame
That takes you to her bosom with a grip,
That, once she holds you, never more shall slip;

So, if there's no objections, hark to me!
I'll sing a sailor's love song to the sea:

"The sea she is my sweetheart;
(A hard old dame, for fair.)
I follows her around the world
(O-ho, she doesn't care.)
To eastward, to southward
To northward and to west,
She beckons me an' calls me
An' never gives me rest.

"A tough old jade,
A rough old jade;
(Oh, sailor pack your kit.)
For when the sea is calling
You've got to up an' git.

"The sea she is my sweetheart;
(A hard old dame for fair.)
Her kiss is salt upon my lips.
(O-ho, she doesn't care.)
I give her faithful service
Because I love her so;
An' so she sends the icy sleet
An' makes the norther blow.

"A mighty jade,
A flighty jade;
(Oh, sailor climb the rail.)
For when the sea is calling,
You've got to hit the trail.

"The sea she is my sweetheart;
(A hard old dame for fair.)
She keeps me poor and homeless,
(O-ho, she doesn't care.)
An' my reward for followin'
Her will from shore to shore,
Is just to take another ship
An' follow her some more.

"A blowsy dame,
A froswy dame;
(O-ho you sailor-men.)
The sea, the sea is callin'
You got to sail again!"

A little quiet chap with pallid face,
Whose aspect and whose clothes were commonplace,
Sighed when the sailor finished with his lay;
Then he observed: "You've *tried* it, anyway;
You've played the game an' dared to sail the foam.
Me, I have longed to, but I've stayed at home.
I've made a livin' an' I've saved, it's true;
An' I've a wife and three fine kiddies, too,

But, damn it all, old man, I envy you;
You done the thing you wanted to, while I
Here in this town, I guess, will live an' die.
Most folks would say—'You're wiser, never doubt it,'
But here's the way, at heart, I feel about it:

"Down at the docks I love to stray
And watch the ships that sail away
For Liverpool and Singapore,
For Rio, Shanghai, Nome,
And every other foreign shore,
And yet—I just stay home.

"The liners and the tramps depart
And I go with 'em, in my heart,
Across the seas to ports that gleam
Under the blue sky's dome.
To travel to them is my dream,
And yet—I just stay home.

"Sometimes I think that I will sail
Out on that heaving ocean trail,
But deep inside of me I know
I'll never get to roam,
I watch the steamers come and go,
But me—I just stay home.

"For I am just the sort of guy
To watch the ships and sit and sigh
And dream about the course they take
Acrost the ocean foam—
And never, never make the break
But just stay home!"

"Funny," the sailor said; "each man on earth
Is envying the other fellow's berth,
An' wishin' it was his'n—listen, bo,
You stay at home an' watch yer children grow;
You got it over me. Let's have a drink.
I might as well be spending all my chink,
Because tonight I've got to take a ship
For Borneo—and that's some little trip."

They drank—and then the sailor, smiling, left.
The other simply sat like one bereft
Of thought of here and now—and muttered low:
"To Borneo—Dear Lord!—To Borneo!"
At length he rose and slowly shuffled out;
His eyes were misty—from the smoke, no doubt.

And so he went his way. But fairly soon
A new gang blithely entered the saloon,
A stalwart bunch whose coming somehow threw
A pall of silence on the ship-yard crew.
For roundabout these fresh accessions clung
A rich aroma: 'twas a scent which flung
Upon the tavern's heavy, smoky air
An extra burden, difficult to bear;
And as about the bar they congregated
The other group, decamped, evaporated.
Hands to their faces as they sought the street
In hasty and disorderly retreat.
Old Joseph in his corner started peeling
An onion as he felt that fragrance stealing
Upon his nostrils from that stalwart crowd;
While Bill the Barkeep, pale, but still endowed
With courtesy (although he held his nose)
Requested them their wishes to disclose
Regarding drinks, and served them, nonetheless,
Despite his great olfactory distress.
They drank, then one, with grimed but pleasant face,
Noting the old piano, took his place
Upon the stool, and hammering the keys'
Began to sing; his lyric lines were these:

"The rose has a scent of its own;
The violet's fragrant as well,
And every old flower that's known
Has one individual smell;
Now we are not flowers at all,
But we've a bouquet anyhow.
The delicate smell that
Permits you to tell that
We work on a garbage scow!

"So it's Yo! and a couple of Ho's!
To know us just follow your nose.
Whenever we sail on our craft down the bay
The rest of the vessels keep out of our way;
We're jolly old salts, and there's some people claim
We're smelling-salts, too, but it's all in the game;
We don't care a cent as we joyously plow
The de-he-he-heap in a garbage scow!

"There's fragrance to Camembert cheese!
And perfume is found in the leek;
Add corned beef and cabbage to these
And garlic to tickle the beak,
And still they aren't in it with us,
A fact you will have to allow
Whenever you're noting
The perfume that's floating
Along with a garbage scow!

"So it's Yo! and a couple of Ho's!
We always win out by a nose.
It's true we don't come from the garden spots
But still we are truly forget-me-nots.
We're jolly Jack Tars, you can tell from afar,
Although it's pitch dark just about where we are;
We don't care a cent as we joyously plow
The de-he-he-heap in a garbage scow!"

"Gents," remarked Bill, "I'm willing to admit
You do good work and should be proud of it,
But just the same I wish you'd blow along;
You're strong with me, but just a shade too strong.
Business is business, boys, and while you're here
Nobody else kin stand the atmosphere.
So on your way! This ain't no dress-suit place,
But I must be some stricter in your case.
Go home and bathe in disinfectant, then
Put on clean duds and drop in here again.
You'll be as welcome as the flowers in May
If you will come here minus your bouquet."
The scavengers departed, as they went,
"Sir," said their minstrel; "you're a perfect gent.
You might have thrown us out upon our necks
For comin' here, fresh from the barge's decks,
An' spoilin' trade; believe me, you're immense;
An' we, we didn't show a bit of sense."
"Maybe you didn't show none," Bill agreed,
"But you brought scents enough for any need."
Bill opened wide the windows, that the air
Might clear the place of fragrance lingering there,
Which noses unattuned to garbage scows
Might find more poignant than the law allows.
And presently the patrons drifted back
And glasses clinked, and tongues began to clack
With gossip of the workshop and the street,
Of fight and frolic, triumph and defeat

Of jobs and bosses, travel, love and hate
And politics and fortune, death and fate.

The Hot Dog's patronage was not confined
To ship yard and to shop; its bar was lined
With casuals from every trade and craft:
Workers and loafers, devotees of graft,
Hobos and true tramps-royal, eddying in
From the great current of the city's din;
Sailors who sailed wherever billows swirled,
And sometimes dwellers of the underworld,
Who stood beside the clerks who lingered there,
Coaxed by the beer and Joseph's bill of fare.
While now and then some corpulent plutocrat
With business in the ship-yards, came and sat
Before a table while he drank a beer.
And thus came customers from far and near,
The good and bad, the high and low, immersed
In one complete democracy of thirst.

And there was talk and song of work and wages,
And tales that had been echoed down the ages
From Homer and from Rabelais, and speech
Of port and city, from a South Sea beach
To Behring Straits, from Boston to Bombay,
Wherever men had been at work or play.
And so it chanced one night a beetle-browed
And heavy-featured member of the crowd,
Who'd stood and listened to some sailor's tale
Of fire aboard a freighter in a gale,
Glanced furtively about the crowded bar,
Then cleared his throat and, speaking to the tar,
Suggested: "Since there ain't no dicks about,
I got a yarn that I might ravel out
For them that cares to hear it." "Spout it, kid,"
The sailor answered, and the yeggman did.

"*I had cracked a jar at Yonkers. I was driftin' down the drag,*
Buyin' wine for everybody with me pockets full of swag,
When I meets a moll who's foxy, and she says to me, says she:
'You're a hick to be a yeggman, an' you take that straight from me,
For the yeggman is a lollop, though he gets away with kale;
For as sure as boobs are easy where he ends is always jail,
He may dodge the harness flatties, he may trick the dicks as well
But he finishes in Sing Sing, in a narrow little cell!'

"*Then I says to her: 'Say, listen; while your chatter's pretty wise,*
I ain't gonna be no sucker like these poor-but-honest guys;
Maybe stir is where I'm headed, but until I lands there, say,
I gets somethin' out of livin' more than three or four per day.
All those honest goofers hope for is a job until they die,
While I'm livin' wide an' handsome, an' I'm flyin' fast an' high;
An' when I goes up the river for my gay career of crime,
I kin think of how I had it an' I blowed it in my time!

"'There is risks in any business; that's a portion of the fun,
But I wonder if you're jerry to the joy it gives a gun
When he busts a jar wide-open that they thought he couldn't crack,
An' he beats it with the rhino by the bushel an' the stack,
While the Pinks run round in circles as they snoop about for clues,
An' I reads of what they're doin' an' I chuckles at the news.
It's a game that's always thrillin', an' it makes the pulses hum,
An' although the bulls may nab me, I'll have made 'em travel some!'

"Well, that little moll considers when she's heard my line of chat;
Then she answers, straight an' honest: 'Say, I never thought o' that!'
I am sick of wrastling cabbage; I've been stuck here like a peg.
Do you think that you could teach me how to be a lady yegg?'
So I takes her as my partner—she's a clever little dame—
An' I learns her all the business, she's a wizard at the same.
We gets married by the parson, for she's strictly on the square;
An' we does our jobs together an' we're cleanin' up for fair!"

Said Bill the Barkeep: "Brother, seems to me,
Your tale ain't moral like it oughta be.
I figured it was gonna be a tale
Of how that lady put you on the trail
To righteousness an' saved you from the ways
Of crime that you had follered all your days.
But as it is, you make me kinda doubt
My safety while you're lingerin' about
An' so I warns you, don't you tap this till.
I got a gun here, an' I sure will drill
Your carcass full of holes if you should try
To stick me up, for I'm a roughhouse guy."

The cracksman grinned. "Don't worry, bo," he laughed,
"I don't go in for any petty graft
Like holdin' up saloons. I got my pride.
Big jobs is all I take—an' then beside,
My moll, she says to me: 'Now listen, Jack,
If I works with you you ain't gonna pack
No kind of gun. A clever crook may squirm
Around the bulls an' never do a term,
But if he takes a shot at some one, then
It means the chair—that's something else again!'

"You say you hoped my little spiel would tell
The way my lady saved me; very well,
She's saved me from a stretch a lotta times
By plannin' out the method of my crimes;
An' when it comes to money—say, me friend,
She's savin' me the wads I used to spend.
We've bought a farm, another job or two,
Will build the house an' furnish it all through;
An' when we've bought them things that we require
We're gonna quit our yeggin' an' retire,
An' start in on the chicken-raisin' biz;
So, if you want a moral, there it is!"

A seedy stranger, seamed of neck and cheek,
And bronzed with many suns, began to speak:
"This talk of jail," he said, "as somethin' sad
Gives me a pain. The calaboose ain't bad
When you know how to use it. East an' west
I been in all the worst ones, an' the best,
In towns that's large an' villages that's small,
An' this is how I feel about 'em all:

"When the voice of Spring says, 'Blow,'
Every hobo hits the grit
For to seek the open country an' the sun;
An' he wanders to an' fro
To wherever he can git;
An' he leads a lazy life till Summer's done.

"Sure it's sweet to taste the breeze,
An' to sprawl upon yer back
With no worry in the heart of you at all;
But when frost is on the trees,
Then it's time to take your pack
An' to beat it to the city with the Fall.

"When the frost comes down,
Then it's back to town,
Where they picks you up some day;
And they lets you dwell
In a nice warm cell
Where there ain't no board to pay.
I ain't one to boast
But I've sampled most
Of the clinks from sea to sea.
When I leaves the trail
It is me for jail
Which is Home Sweet Home to me.

"Oh, the turnkeys knows my face
From Toronto to Mobile,
An' from Portland Maine way out to Portland, O.,
An' they always gives me space
In a cell, so I can feel
That I've got a home wherever I may go.
I gets tumbled off of cars;
I gets hustled off the streets,
An' the janitors of churches hollers 'scat!'
I gets booted out of bars,
But I'm sure of bed an' eats
For the jails has 'Welcome' written on the mat!

"When the wind gets keen
And the handouts lean,
An' the roads is on the blink,
Then I beats it straight
To the hoosegow gate,
For it's snug an' warm in clink.
So I takes my ease

Under locks an' keys,
An' it sure is nice to be
Out of wind an' storm
In a jail that's warm,
Which is Home Sweet Home to me."

"Speakin' of jails," a brawny sailor said,
"Here in the States they may mean board and bed,
But at some ports where I have got in Dutch
The turnkeys doesn't feed you very much.
Your bed's a board, whenever it ain't stone
That chills you to the very marrow bone.
Yet I must say you do meet up with blokes
In jail sometimes that's interestin' folks.

F'r instance, down in one town in Peru,
I lands in prison for a day or two
Until the captain, bein' short of men,
Finds where I am an' gets me out again.
Well, while I'm there, my cellmate is a geek
That's got a red scar runnin' down his cheek,
A twisted mouth an' eyes that's glowerin' green.
He wears a crimson head-dress on his bean;
An' when he speaks—say, I'm a sailor, see;
It's pretty hard to shock a bird like me—
But when that feller's tongue begins to clack
His curses is so wicked an' so black,
I sit an' shudder, an' this mop of mine
Begins to raise, an' all along my spine
I feels the cold chills chasin'.
In my sleep
I'd hear him gruntin' somethin', low an' deep,
A kind of chant that gets me wide awake
An' makes my heart stand still, my body quake;
An' lyin' there I learns his cussed song
I won't forget it all my whole life long.

"Cutlas and knife, cutlas and knife;
Blood's the joy of a pirate's life;
Our ship was swift and our flag was black,
And we were a murderous wolfish pack,
Led by the wickedest ruthless brute
That ever scuttled a ship for loot.
We drank black rum in a fiery flood
But our hottest thirst was a thirst for blood.

"Cutlas and knife, cutlas and knife;
We dreamed of slaughter and thrived on strife;
We laughed when decks were a slippery red
And hatches cluttered with heaped-up dead.
With knives still clenched in our gleaming teeth
We tossed our foes to the sharks beneath,
Then shared our plunder of gear and gold
And broached the rum that was in the hold.

"Cutlas and knife, cutlas and knife;
Blood's the joy of a pirate's life;
I try my blade with a questing thumb;
My throat is dry for a swig of rum,
And I dream at night of the fights we fought
The loot we took and the wreck we wrought,
And I wake, and I wake with a thirst for gore
As I did in the red raw days of yore,
When I thrust and parried and killed for gold
When I was a pirate bold.
Cutlas and knife, cutlas and knife,
Blood's the joy of a pirate life!'

"That was the song he'd sing and then he'd mumble
Strings of hot oaths that sort of seemed to rumble
Straight up from hell. He was a merry chum
To spend the night with. When the mornin' come
I'd lose my fright, but all day long he spoke
Of all the people that he used to croak
When he was buccaneerin', an' I'd sit,
Drinkin' in every syllable of it,
Half-charmed, half-scared by his blasphemous tongue,
An' wonder how it was he hadn't hung.
But when the captain came an' set me free,
I says to him: 'Say, Captain, do you see
That hard old party with the ugly scar?
I reckon there ain't many, near or far
That's done more crimes. He's sure a bad old bird.'
The captain laughs: 'That bum? Say, ain't you heard?
He never even saw no buccaneers;
He's lived around this burg for forty years
An', havin' read a lot of pirate bunk
Whenever he is jailed for bein' drunk,
He gets some boob like you an' fills him full
With all that bunch of buccaneerin' bull.
That cut along his cheek he got complete
By fallin' through a window from the street.
He's harmless, kid, but slippin' him his due,
His cussin' is surpassed by very few.' "

"To get away from jails a while, I think
If all you boys will join me in a drink
I'll spin a yarn," a customer declared.
And while the bunch his liquid bounty shared,
His narrative he hastened to unfold;
And this is how his chronicle was told:

"When I was a boy I had lots of ambition,
But little enough of the cash;
But, spite of my poverty stricken condition,
(For, being a youth, I was rash.)
I said to Miss Carrie O'Leary—
'I want you to marry me, dearie.'
But Carrie said tartly to me:
'For sure you're a pleasant young chappy;

I'm fond of you, too, as can be;
But how could we live and be happy
On nothing a year, I can't see;
I ain't mercenary,' said dear little Carrie,
'But money's what keeps us alive,
And your share of pelf hardly cares for yourself
And what would you do if you had to keep two
And possibly three, four, or five!'

"Said I: 'You have surely said something.
The truth is I haven't a dime;
But life would be sort of a glum thing
Unless I could win you in time.
So if you will wait for me, honey,
I'll go seek a potful of money.'
'You bet you,' said Carrie, 'I'll wait.'
And so, loving her and her only,
I went forth to conquer my fate;
But finding the process was lonely
I married a lady named Kate.
In ten years or so I had plenty of dough
And Kate had divorced me; and then
Being lonesome for home I sailed over the foam;
Having money to spare it was nothing but fair
To come back to Carrie again.

"And Carrie, the canny and thrifty
Was tickled to see me once more,
She weighed some two hundred and fifty
But still seemed as sweet as before.
Said Carrie: 'I've lovingly waited
With faith and with hope unabated,
And buried three husbands in style;
And if the fourth one wasn't living
I'd march with you right down the aisle;

And though no false hopes I'd be giving
You might stick around for a while.
I've waited for you with a heart that is true
And who can say what might occur?
My old man's not well and you never can tell.'
And therefore, you see, since she'd waited for me,
I'm patiently waiting for her!"

"There's nothin' quite like love," a slender-framed
And wiry-muscled customer exclaimed,
"It makes the world go round, or so they say,
It sets men's heads to whirlin', anyway;
It's bound to get you some time; you can fly
To any place you please, but by and by
You'll go the way of others, sure as fate.
Take it from me, I'll slip it to you straight.

"For instance, there was Fred the steeple-jack,
A friend of mine. That fellow had a knack
For climbin' that was marvelous, immense.
He'd scale a buildin' like you would a fence,
Crawl up some fifty floors or so with ease,
And balance on the flag-pole in the breeze.
But say, when he was near a pretty frail
Or even one who's plain, his face would pale,
An' then get red; he'd stammer and he'd choke;
His bashfulness became a daily joke
With all who knowed him. Why we used to claim
That when he sighted any kind of dame
Comin' his way, he'd scamper up a wall
Just like a squirrel does a tree—and all
Our kiddin' wouldn't make him move a hair
Until the girl had went away from there.
One day while Fred is sittin' with a bunch
Of girder-monkeys that is eatin' lunch,
A girl blows by—she's on a motor-bike—
She stops an' asks her way. Fred jumps, an' like
A monkey goes a mountin' toward the sky,
Up posts an' trusses that was towerin' high
Above the street. The lady sees him go.
'Why is it that he started climbin' so?'
She asks the boys. 'Lady,' replies the crew,
'He's bashful an' afraid to death of you.'
The lady smiles an' kind of pouts, an' then
Says she: 'I am not used to havin' men
Go flecin' from me. Ask him to come down.

He won't come?' she repeated, with a frown;
'That's very rude; if we could have a chat
I'm sure he would apologize for that.
I'll go and see!' She drops her bike, *kerflop*—
An' then before the boys could make her stop
Swarms up a post as swift as lightnin', Gee!
That dame could climb; her legs an' feet was free
For she was dressed in knickers. Up she scrambled;
Fred saw her comin', an' you bet he rambled
To higher levels. Still the girl ascended,

An' Fred increased his speed until he ended
By shinnin' up the crane that stood upon
The fortieth story; but the girl kept on
An' climbed that crane with most astoundin' vim
An' at the top at last caught up with him.

"Now what they said, of course, we couldn't tell;
They stayed up there for quite a little spell
An' then came down together to the street,
Fred lookin' sheepish after his defeat.
'Wasn't he nice?' the little lady cooed,
'He has apologized for being rude.
And I am sure from all that he has said,
We'll be the best of friends—now, won't we, Fred?'
Fred blushed an' nodded, an' that plucky frail
Picked up her bike again an' hit the trail.
Get him? Of course she got him; say, what chance
Had he to dodge the cant-hooks of romance
With such a dame? His destiny was sealed.
Within a month the weddin' chimes had pealed.
An' then we heard how she had learned to climb:
She'd scaled high mountain-peaks from time to time,
And after scramblin' up a snow-clad spur
A mere steel frame was simply pie for her.
And there you are. Believe me, boys, or not,
There ain't no country an' there ain't no spot
Far underground, or high up in the air
That some dame, sometime, will not catch you there."
"Ain't it the truth?" the gathered gang agreed,
"No matter what your foxiness or speed
You fall at last." They filled their steins and glasses
And drank libation to their wives and lasses,
And womankind in general, who give
The savor to whatever life we live.

"Pack a hod or swing a pick,
Gamble, work or steal,
Dodge the job or do your trick
Somewhere in the deal;
There's a dame you do it for,
One that you go through it for
Till you get your call.
She's the worst and best of you,
Devil take the rest of you,
It's no use at all!

"Drink, drink, drink to her health;
Drink, drink, drink to her wealth;
Say what you please about her,
For one thing's sure and we shout it clear:
If it wasn't for woman we wouldn't be here,
And we aren't worth a damn without her!

"Love holds a man, all right, and that's the truth,
But there's a stronger call that comes to youth
And makes him quit his home and leave his girl,

And sets his fibers and his blood awhirl.
No matter what the cause he's fighting for,
Youth thrills and goes when drum-beats sound for war!"
It was a soldier speaking, young and trim,
Deep-chested, bronzed, and straight of back and limb;
"Take me, for instance, I was meant to be
A minister, they educated me
To preach the Word—but it so happened I
Beheld a troop of soldiers marching by
With swinging stride, and something in my blood
Responded to the steady thud, thud, thud
Of feet upon the roadway—then the fife
Shrilled and the snare drum wakened into life;
And as the marchers quickened to the rhythm,
I knew that I should soon be marching with 'em.
It was the drums that did it, for they beat
A summons to adventure I should meet;
And so I went to war—and though I learned
It was not what I pictured when I yearned
For great adventure; but an ugly mess
Of dirt and blood and pain and weariness,
Yet still I found that to your soul it brings
A strange distaste for gentler, milder things.
And so, no matter where I chance to be
This is the song the drum-beats make for me:

"Tumpy-tum-tump; tumpy-tum-tump—
Hark to the sound of the drums.
Tumpy-tum-tump; tumpy-tum-tump;
The beat and the thud that you feel in your blood,
The heart-shaking rhythm that comes
With thunder and throb of the drums,
The drums! The drums!
R-r-rat-a-tat-tat, r-r-rat-a-tat-tat, r-r-rat-a-tat-tat, and boom!
Way for the drums, make room!

"For the roll of the drums is a time-honored tone—
The mightiest music the planet has known.
It rumbled its summons to primitive man—
Reverberant rhythm that gathered the clan.
It beat out a challenge to frighten the foe
And thudded a dirge for the warriors laid low.
The drums! The drums!
Oh, down all the ages there comes
The echoing boom of the drums;
Roman and Greek,
Saxon and Gaul
Heard the drums speak,
Answered the call—
Drums of the vikings, stout henchmen of Thor,
War-drums of Attilla, Red Scourge of War—
Drums sounding slowly and drums beating fast
Over the world in a symphony vast!
Down to the depths of our nature it plumbs,
Tumpy-tum-tump! Tumpy-tum-tump!
Militant surge of the drums!

The drums! The drums!
They stir us from sloth that benumbs
Bass-drums and kettle-drums thundering loud,
Snare-drums that startle and hearten the crowd;
Lifting the soul as they quicken their beat,
Throbbing with triumph and mocking defeat;
Voice of adventure and vaunt of romance,
Daring the wrath of the grim gods of chance—
All in the rhythm that dauntlessly comes
Out of the Drums! Out of the Drums!
Tumpy-tum-tump! Tumpy-tum-tump!
Hark to the sound of the drums.
Tumpy-tum-tump! Tumpy-tum-tump!
The beat and the thud that you feel in your blood—
The heart-shaking rhythm that comes
With the thunder and throb of the drums!
R-r-rat-a-tat-tat; r-r-rat-a-tat-tat; r-r-rat-a-tat-tat, and boom!
Way for the drums, way for the drums,
Way for the drums—make room!"

"I likes the drums, but when it comes to playin'
That gets your feet to tappin', body swayin';
I reckon," Bill propounded, "I am keen
For music coaxed from out an accordeen."
"Show us," a customer demanded, "for we're jake
You got a concertina; go on, make
That instrument talk turkey, you can do it.
Bring out that accordeen and go right to it."

Thus urged, Bill brought to light an instrument
On which two weeks of salary he'd spent;
Coaxed from its bellows a queer wheedling sound
Then said to all the patrons, gathered round,
"Gents, the old accordeen remarks as how
It doesn't feel so very tuneful now,
But if each gent will kindly name his drink
And pass to me the necessary chink,
My friend, the accordeen, he says to me,
He'll entertain yuh very cheerfully."

The patrons laughed and took the hint; right soon
Bill served them all, and then began a tune
Upon his concertina. Soft and low
The first notes came like gentle winds that blow
From off the Summer sea; and then Bill hit
A swifter pace; he "Got right down to it."
Some banged the bar in cadence to the notes;
While other men were humming in their throats
The melodies that Bill the Barkeep played:
"My Old Kentucky Home," "The Nut Brown Maid,"
And "Money Musk," and oh, a dozen more
Of good old songs and ballads writ of yore;
Then, when he had the listeners in a snare
Of rhythm and of music debonair,
He played a tickling, tingling sort of air,
And with his eyes a-sparkle, body swinging,
He lifted up his voice and started singing:

"Old Bill Riddle can't play the fiddle,
Can't play piano but he sure is keen
When he starts to playin', body all a-swayin',
Coaxin' out the music from his accordeen!
Makes you sorta prickle, gives your feet a tickle;
Will you love to listen, oh, I'll say you will!
Come around an' hear him! Say, when you are near him
You'll be buck-an'-wingin', cause you can't keep still!

"Can't keep still! Can't keep still;
Sets your heart to thumpin'; gives yer spine a thrill;
Makes you wanta shimmy with your little queen
When Bill plays on the accordeen!
Feet git restless—tap-tap-tap—
Can't keep quiet, don't you care a rap,
For you can't keep, can't keep, can't keep still,
Never could resist it an' you never will.
Starts the crowd a hoppin' like a jumpin'-bean
When Bill plays on the accordeen.

"With no warnin', on a Sunday mornin'
Minister was preachin' in a voice serene;
All the congregation hears a syncopation;
Bill is passin' with his accordeen.
Preacher's feet is itchin'; congregation twitchin';
Then the parson leads 'em an' they follers Bill;
Ain't no use delayin' when he starts to playin'
Gotta follow after for you can't keep still!"

They made him play and sing that tune again
And then some more, and all that crowd of men
Like children to a hurdy-gurdy pranced,
Whooped in their joy, and danced and danced and danced,
Chasséd and balanced, jigged and whirled about,
Till they and Bill were totally worn out.
The crowd began to thin; the joyous riot
Dwindled to conversation low and quiet;
Men sipped their beer and talked of this and that;
Bill wiped his bar. The sleek and portly cat,
No longer hiding, now the noise had died,
Came out and walked about with seemly pride;
Thus midnight came. Bill dimmed a light or two;
Michael the Swamper shuffled into view,
Woke up two sleepers drowsing at a table
And pointed to the clock. The busy babel
Of voices in the tavern was diminished;
In groups and pairs the various patrons finished
Their final drink and drifted out the door.
Michael the Swamper dourly swept the floor
While Bill washed up his glasses, wiped the bar
And dimmed more lights. Old Joseph put his jar
Of mustard under cover, packed away
His food supplies, and, calling it a day,
Donned hat and coat and shambled out of sight,
Giving to Bill and Mike a gruff "Good night."

Bill doffed his apron, slipped his mufti on,
Murmured "So long" to Michael, and was gone.
The swamper moved about the empty room
A gnome-like figure in the tavern's gloom,
Bent, aged, listless, cleaning up the litter
That men will leave behind them. All the glitter
And warmth seemed gone; the place was damp, inert,
Full of stale smells, and emptiness and dirt.
And as he toiled, old Michael seemed to groan
A sort of chant in muttered monotone,
A chant which had, perhaps, been handed down
From swamper unto swamper, town to town.

"Dogs and beer, dogs and beer—
An' gone to the dogs, says I;
Where is the fun an' drink an' cheer
When the swamper swamps? says I.
For the lights is dim an' the place is cold,
An' it isn't the drink but you that's sold,
Bleary, dreary an' broke an' old,
The same as myself, says I.

"Youth is gay as a lighted bar
With drink an' with song, says I;
But the light goes out like a dead cigar
An' you're musty an' stale, says I.
You're like this joint when I cleans, I guess,
Empty, gloomy, an' lonely, yes,
An' littered up with a lot o' mess,
The same as myself, says I.

"Dogs an' beer, dogs an' beer—
An' gone to the dogs, says I;
Where is the drink an' fun an' cheer,
When the swamper swamps? says I.
For the swamper comes an' douses the glim
(His name is Death, have you heard of him?)
An' he starts to puttin' the place in trim,
An', 'My, what a mess,' says he."

And thus old Michael chanted at his work
This cheerful ballad, till amid the murk
His labors were completed. Then he crept
Into a corner of the room and slept.
Time and the laws move on; it's better thus
Though tragic, now and then, to some of us;
The Hot Dog Tavern's closed; its battered sign
Is dull and dusty and the flasks of wine
That once were in the window glow no more.
Dust and not sawdust heaps upon the floor,
And Bill and Joseph, as the poets say,
"Abode their destined hour, and went their way."
Michael alone, the ancient swamper, steals
Sometimes at midnight—slouchy, out at heels—
Near to the door and peers, and seems to hark
To some vague whisper coming from the dark;
A ghost of song, as though a spirit gang
Were in the place where once they gaily sang.

"We slap down our chink for some real food and drink,
A roll and a dog and a beer!
A dog and a roll
Are good for the soul,
But best of the three is the beer!"

Then Michael shakes his head, and down the street
Shambles along, the while his lips repeat—

"Dogs an' beer, dogs an' beer,
An' gone to the dogs, says I,
Where is the drink an' fun an' cheer
When the swamper swamps? says I."

THE PRIMITIVE METHOD

By F. R. Buckley

Author of "Wonderful Air," "Appearances," etc.

"For now I know that thou fearest God: seeing that thou hast not witheld thy son, thine only son."
Genesis xxii, 12.

I WILL attribute this one story to Alexander McWhee, chief engineer of the steam tramp *Elizabeth Wakelin*, and then I will positively withdraw the man from literature. He used to be a delightful liar—more cheerful, and much more indecent, than Boccaccio; but since prohibition has become an accomplished joke, he seems to have struck a dismal vein of narrative. And while I have to visit his grease-dadoed cabin, for old sakes' sake, whenever the *Elizabeth* waddles into port, there is no good reason why I should pass his methylated woes on to the public.

Imagine the humiliation of being compelled to state, as preface to this yarn, that I found him lying in his bunk, bare feet out of the doorway to catch the port-to-starboard breeze through the alleyway—reading the Holy Bible! After a Bombay-to-New York voyage, too; with the delights of the Orient still fresh in his mind; the pleasures of the maritime Middle West—Liverpool—fresher still; and the joys of the Occident beckoning through a lavender evening mist as concealing, as alluring, and as brightly spangled as a nautch-girl's *sarong*.

"Na, na," said McWhee, when I pointed this out to him. "Nautch me nae nautch-girls, laddie. Was it you that I intrrrajeeced to Bob Graham o' the *City o' Mombasa*, that time in the back street at Marseilles?"

"No," I said.

"Then it was somebody else," sighed McWhee, laying aside the Book and taking up the Bottle, "an' ye dinna ken Robert. An' noo ye never wull—the which is a great loss. Na, na, ye'll never ken Robert Graham noo—he's gi'en up the watter."

IN SPITE of which recommendation, I don't know that I should have cared for Mr. Graham, even had he been available.

We should not have had graduation from Messrs. Thorneycroft's eminent academy in common; and, though McWhee will not believe it, there are people I prefer, as conversational companions, to fifty-year-old Tynesiders who talk, when ashore, about nothing but religion and their only sons; and when at sea, about nothing but religion and engines. In Mr. Graham's case, the religion was Primitive Methodism, the engines were triple-expansion, and the only son was named Robert after his father. Nominally to avoid confusion of names, but actually to evade any suspicion of favoritism, young Robert Graham was carried on the books of the *City of Mombasa* under the name of Ker—James Ker. He was fourth engineer, his father being chief.

"*The Primitive Method*," *copyright, 1924, by F. R. Buckley.*

"Didn't the gang laugh at this alias business?" I asked.

"Hoo could they laugh, whenas they kent naething aboot it—till the proper time?" inquired McWhee. "What would be the sense o' makin' the laddie sign articles *incognito*, as 't were, if everybody was tae be let into the secret? Na, na. His father ca'ed him 'Mister Ker,' an' he ca'ed his dad 'sir,' an' discipline was maintained wi'oot a crack. Not that onybody would ha' laughed at old Bob Graham in ony case. He was no a humorous man."

I should say he wasn't! One of his favorite moral theories, it seems, was that hell is in two sections; one here, and a hotter one hereafter; and that every man—having come into this world bung-full of original sin—is bound to patronize one establishment or the other. Graham himself, for instance, was working out part of his salvation in the *City of Mombasa*, whose engines were liable to counterfeit the infernal regions—steam, shrieks, red-hot metal and all—at any moment; whereas the brass-bound engineers of the P. & O., with their humming turbines and their cabins that hummed with fans, were simply extending their sinful notes of hand to be payable after death.

"Seriously?" I inquired.

"Aye," said McWhee. "Vara seriously."

Seeing that he held the same views himself, I let it go at that; and was forthwith introduced to the story proper.

The *City of Mombasa* met a gale in the Bay of Biscay; one wave of which took hold of twenty feet of solid steel bulwark, tore it loose from all its rivets save three, and left it hanging over the ship's port bow, where other seas could lift it light-heartedly, and slam it back against the side in a manner calculated to punch holes in the rusted plates.

The month was January, and the temperature of the sea was somewhere down in the basement of the thermometer; but nevertheless, it was obvious that if no one man would take an icy ducking, everybody would; in other words, unless somebody crawled forward across the alternately submerged and naked iron plates of the deck, a rope around his middle and a hacksaw in his teeth, and cut that flapping five tons of bulwark loose, the ship would sink. The second officer tried it—and went overboard. The bosun started out with a cold chisel and a maul, but was picked up by a sea and hammered against a stanchion until his skull opened and his brains ran out.

It was at this point that young James Ker, *né* Graham, remarked that steel-work belonged to the engine-room anyhow, and went forward unroped, to see what he could do with those rivets. It was the general opinion that this lack of a lashing accounted for his success—he had no rope to hamper his movements when the deck was clear, and nothing to trust but the grip of his own hands when seas roared over him. Further, he had the happy thought of jamming himself in the fork of the bitts; which, incidentally crushing two of his ribs, held him in position while he cut through the first rivet.

He had to crawl out of the steel embrace to get at the second; and the sea which caught him in the act of changing position almost sent him to join the second officer and the bo'sun. Though it failed in this, it stripped him of his trousers, his socks and his boots, and left him with so long a cut in his forehead that he could only see to hacksaw for thirty seconds at a time—the thirty seconds following the washing of his wound by a fifty-ton wave.

Under these circumstances, he cannot be blamed for taking half an hour to saw through the second rivet. He did not touch the third. Just as he prepared to hang over the side and grope for it, the ocean took the bulwark and twisted it clean off.

At the engineers' mess that night, Robert Graham, Senior, spoke three words—which, for him, at a meal-time, was loquacity indeed.

After the fourth engineer's heroism had been discussed for half an hour, and Mr. Graham had entirely finished his dinner, to the point, even, of wiping his mouth after the blackberry pie, he arose, jerked his thumb toward the cabin where James Ker lay, and said—

"Yon's my son."

Then he went away, and locked himself in his room until eight bells. Judging by the aroma in the alleyway, he celebrated the occasion by smoking a cigar. His usual load was plug.

"Sinful pride," I remarked.

"Ye think so?" asked McWhee, surveying me over a whisky glass. "Aye. Ye would—no' bein' a Scot. But Bob Graham the elder was a religious man—an' a philosopher."

"Oh," I said, repenting my irony.

"Aye," said McWhee.

IT IS a well-known fact in physics, that oil and water won't mix. It is a still better known fact at sea, where the two substances are brought together through their attorneys, the engineers and the deck-officers, that unless both oil and water are unusually pure, they will form an unpleasant compound at the line of contact.

On the *City of Mombasa*, the engineers were sufficiently alloyed with human nature to crow over their hereditary enemies, the deck crowd; and Williams, the captain, was impure enough to desire revenge.

So he dropped into the engineers' mess one afternoon at tea time; and after inquiring about certain ballast tanks started during the storm, improved the shining hour by taking the chief engineer to task before three juniors.

"Why did you have your son ship under a false name?" he asked.

Mr. Graham thought about that during three several gulps of boiling tea.

"Expeejency," he growled at last.

"Meaning what?" asked the captain, settling himself comfortably against a doorpost.

Graham laid aside his cup.

"Well, I'll tell you, Cap'n Williams," he said, slowly. "Ah'm no a liar by taste, just the same's the board o' this line are no' fools by profession. But in some respects, they are fools; an' one o' these respects is their dislike for havin' relatives together in ships. Ah'm a God-fearin' mon, Captain Williams; but on that very account, Ah'm also a just one. The *Manchester* bein' laid up for repairs, my boy was in need o' this job—an' weel fitted for't—as he proved twa days syne."

One of the juniors chuckled. Graham stared him into decorum.

"So," ended the chief, "when he was to be robbed o't by prejudice, I defended him by lyin'. The matter was no important."

"Why didn't you keep the lie up?"

"Because when he'd cut the bulwark loose, it became important. Ah'll no' go intae the philosophy o't, Captain Williams. Ah'm a just mon, as I've telt ye; an' justice demanded that, havin' howked the boy through everythin' from measles to smashed fingers, an' stayed in jobs for his sake that no bachelor or childless mon would ha' stuck for a week, I should take what credit he could do me, an' rejoice in the same."

Williams gave a short laugh.

"Well—heads I win, tails you lose," he sneered. "That's a regular Scotch trick. You disown him except when he makes a hit, an' then you step up for your share of the glory. Your God-fearin' scales of justice have only got one pan."

Graham arose.

"You misunderstand me, Captain," he said grimly. "Ah'm indifferent to the lad only so long as it *mak's* no difference. If I tak' pride in him when he deserves it, I tak' responsibility for him when he doesna."

"You mean that if he'd come into notice for stealing rivets, instead of cuttin' through a couple of them, you'd have said you were his pa just the same?" demanded Williams, moving out into the alleyway. "Yes, you would, like ——!"

"Aye," said Robert Graham, Senior.

Judging by the finality with which McWhee reached for the bottle, this seemed to be the end of a chapter or something—an unsatisfactory end; an embarrassing end; a subtly menacing end, which left me ill at ease.

"That word 'Aye,' " the present writer remarked nervously, "seems to be much in use among engineers, he-he!"

"Aye," said McWhee.

WE NOW come to the *City of Mombasa's* return voyage from Bombay to Barrow-in-Furness with cotton; week the second, and the third day. I apologize for this affected and inaccurate method of saying it was the seventeenth day out; but McWhee was so infernally Biblical that I find my style still influenced.

He was also quite noticeably lit when we reached this part of the story, which is why some circumstances following are not as clearly defined as I should like. My impression is that the *Mombasa* had shipped a new stokehold bunch—all Lascars—in Bombay; had taken on two hundred tons of coal, carried in baskets by yelling Arabs, at Port Said, after the fourteen-hour run through the red and green buoys of the canal; and was making her way through the Mediterranean against a gale and a nasty short dead-sea. At four bells in the middle watch, the relieving helmsman had let the ship sheer two points off her course, and a sea had swept the head and foredeck clean of ventilators, awning stanchions, and even the great brass bell.

The engines were rung to half speed; the watch on deck turned out, with the third officer, to investigate damage and cover the wrecked ventilators. It was eight bells before the third returned to the bridge to report; and at this hour he found Captain Williams in a fine temper over the speaking tube.

"Yes, it's your —— son's watch in the engine-room, ain't it?" he was demanding. "Well, suppose you kindly go down an' tell him I'd just as soon my ship kept her propellers, if it's all the same to him. The screws have raced their fool heads off ten times in the last ten minutes, an' the engine-room don't answer the tube. You claim to be responsible for him, so——"

"Aye," said Robert Graham, Senior; and in purple pajamas, list slippers, and a uniform cap, left his gyrating cabin for the slick bars of the engine-room's upper platform. As he leaned over the rail, peering down into the thrashing maze of polished steel and red paint, the *City of Mombasa* pitched wildly; and the engines, port and starboard, roared on their bed-plates as the water-freed screws hammered the air.

There was nobody at the throttle valve.

Mr. Graham pushed his cap rather far back on his head, and went down the dizzy ladder rather faster than he was used. From the middle platform, in the stifling stratum of the cylinder heads, he perceived that the footplate was not only minus its attendant engineer, but entirely deserted. Not even a wiper was in sight.

For the first time in the forty years since he had become salted to engine-room temperatures, Mr. Graham found himself sweating. He also found himself endowed with a power of voice he had never before possessed. His first shout, uttered in direct competition with the booming trample of the crank-pits, brought a scared-looking Lascar from the direction of the stokehold door.

"Where's officer-*sahib?*"

The Lascar approached sidewise, fawning.

"Where's the fourth engineer, ye black hunk o' perdition?"

The donkeyman spread his hands, muttering something about "go on deck;" and Graham, grabbing the throttle as the steel floor beneath him tilted forward and down for another plunge, sank his teeth into his lower lip. The engines, checked too late, shook the ship for an instant; and there was something in the feel of their vibration that diverted the chief engineer's eyes from the face of the Lascar, to the steam gage.

The needle, which should have been touching one hundred and fifty pounds, was vibrating uncertainly around one hundred and ten. That would never do. The Lascars had been soldiering on the fires; and the first thing was not to find the fourth engineer, even if he was not overboard, but to get that pressure up again. The bridge might ring for full speed at any instant.

"You savvy work this?" demanded Graham, Senior, slapping the throttle.

The Lascar stepped forward, smiling; but there was a look in his eyes——

"*Atcha, sahib.*"

The ship pitched again, and the man eased the valve well enough. The chief engineer, his face strangely set, his pajamas flapping, rounded the forward guard of the starboard engines, and dived through the stokehold door.

None of the furnaces was open. It was by the dim light of slush lamps hung on the sides of that steel vault, that Graham glared at his dusky underlings. There seemed to be a good many of them—more than one watch; all sitting on their hams, with the whites of their eyes showing.

"*Serang!*" roared Graham. "What the ——'s goin' on here? Stoke, ye scuts, before I——"

The leading fireman, who had a white beard, got up; and so, without orders, did all the other stokers, including the deputy *serang*, the *burra tindel*, who ought to have been off watch. And though one man opened a furnace door, letting out a vivid orange glare to illumine that wild scene, the general movement was not, after the Lascar manner, away from the *sahib;* but—toward him.

The *serang* gave an order; it was not obeyed. He had to repeat it in a snarl before his men turned away and flung themselves at shovels and slice bars. And he had to speak yet again before the *burra tindel* left his side, and retired to the other end of the hold with the rest of the off-watch.

"It was noo that puir Gra-hic-ham's bluid must ha' begun to run cold," said McWhee, wagging his head from side to side in a manner most detrimental to the thread of the story. "In such fashion that instead o' askin' further concernin' the steam pressure, which normally he would ha' investigated wi' a wheel wrench, he looked the *serang* i' the eye an'—

"'*Serang*,' says he hoarse-like, 'whaur's my son, the fourth engineer-*sahib*?'

"An' the serang replied as followeth, to wit: That the young *sahib* had protested that one of the fiddley doors had jammed, and had gone on deck to wrastle with it; since when he had not returned.

"To the which Robert Graham replied, asking—

" 'Did he come through here—has he been in here tonight?' an' the *serang* made answer, 'Nay.'

"An' Robert Graham the senior then said—

" 'Ye lie, ye black ——, an' you've murdered my son!' "

McWhee now endeavored to burst into tears, wipe his eyes on a towel, and go to sleep, simultaneously. His desires being various, while I was single-minded, however, I won.

It appeared, rather disjointedly, that the *serang's* next remark was an advice to the chief *sahib* not to lay violence upon him, unless he desired death at the hands of the *burra tindel* and his men; who had crept nearer bearing the tools of their trade—though they were off watch.

"The *sahib* has said, in the presence of one of ours who waits upon the table, that he is a just man, and fears God. I, too, fear God, and am just. Let us therefore speak together like just men, not snarling in the way of dogs."

"In irons, an' ye'll hang at Liverpool!" gasped the chief engineer, staring wildly from what looked like a lump of coal at his feet, to the face of the *serang*.

"Wait, children," said the *serang* to the *burra tindel's* party.

And then to the white man:

"I, too, am a father."

Now chief engineer Graham burst through his Primitive Methodism into a stream of horrible oaths, and turned to rush back into the engine-room; but half a dozen lascars barred the way; and when he tried to rush them, they seized him and wrapped their wiry, sweating limbs about him, and bore him backward, and clamped his arms and legs, by sheer weight, to the hot steel floor.

He yelled at the top of his voice, knowing that he could not be heard above the beat of the seas on the closed deck gratings. There was, even, no racing of the screws to bring aid down into the engine-room. The Lascar donkeyman was easing the throttle with the dull reliability of the native under white command.

"Hurt him not, my children," said the *serang*. "He is a just man— Can the *sahib* hear me?"

Graham, staring up into the white-bearded brown face in the glare from a furnace door, gave a choking sob.

"*Sahib*," said the *serang* gravely, "I have killed your son. I am not a common Lascar, to lie under accusation. And in my time I shall be judged; but not now; and not in Li-'v-'apol. Were I hanged now, my daughter and her man-child would starve, and my honor be as black as though I had not avenged her. Thy son was a stealer upon the housetops; a murderer to boot."

Robert Graham writhed violently under the hands of the Lascars holding him.

"Ye lie!"

"Nay. I lie only in the way of business; not in the way of honor. I am—I was a merchant. Be just, O just man; cause me not to kill thee, and bear a double burden. Was not thy son in Bombay, a twelvemonth gone, in the ship *Man-chester*—for two months, while there were repairs? Then he defiled my house by stealth; then he slew my son in law, who discovered him. And I have awaited his return, paying many spies; and I have crossed the black water, working with my hands, for my revenge. Judge me, O God fearer! Look me in the face— Let him to his feet, dogs."

The fathers, the two just men, stood eye to eye; in the glare, as it were, of Hades; surrounded by imps of the pit.

"How it became known that I had done this thing, I know not," said the *serang*. "It was written that I should trust thy justice, rather than the lies of these dogs. Thy son defiled my house; I have purified it with the flames of his body, burning in that furnace. He slew my son by marriage; I have slain him. Judge, then!"

For half a minute, if my imagination is any good at all, there was a silence which the roar of the great fires, the thunder of seas on the deck, and the din of the engine-room, allied, were powerless to break. Then—I quote McWhee literally, less only the accent and the hiccoughs—then old Robert Graham turned slowly about, picked up the object like a lump of coal, which had lain at his feet when he accused the *serang*, and made as if to stuff this object into his pajamas pocket. This task proved difficult,

the object being of awkward shape, and Graham's fingers trembling as if palsied.

Finally, he took heart of grace, and flung it on the plates at the *serang's* feet.

"I'll—I'll no remember a seducer of women!" choked the chief engineer. "Throw's cap—throw's cap in—after 'm!"

Then, none hindering, he stumbled through the stokehold door and back into the engine-room.

Robert Graham, Junior, alias James Ker, was logged as lost at sea.

Once more, his father locked himself in his cabin; but this time there was no smell of cigars.

"Is that all?" I asked.

"Aye," said McWhee; and went to sleep.

HE WAS fairly gone this time; but I had a chair and a novel and a pipe, and I waited until he awoke. This was two hours; during which time I read one paragraph and a half. The rest of the time was occupied in an examination of the face of McWhee; which in all probability bore a strong resemblance to that of Robert Graham, Senior. Same county, you know; same boiler works; same religion.

There were many things to notice in that face—a lot of faces, for one. There was a distinct resemblance to John Calvin, and another to Abraham Lincoln; though that may have been merely a matter of warts. Then one was reminded, somehow, of geology and botany—of granite rocks, and of sparse, desperately vital heather overgrowing them.

When he awoke, I asked him one question.

"D'you expect me to believe that tale about Graham and his son?" I inquired.

My drunken friend stared reproachfully at that blab, the empty bottle; wiped his mouth with the back of his hand; and then looked me in the eyes much as Graham must have looked at the *serang*.

"Aye," said McWhee.

Author of "Mohammed's Tooth," "The Nine Unknown," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

WHEN Cottswold Ommony, forester in the Civil Service of India, drifted into the die-hard club at Delhi the members straightway began to gossip about him. They recalled that Jack Terry, the M. D., married Ommony's younger sister Elsa twenty years before; that an American pork packer named Marmaduke persuaded Terry to become medico at the Buddhist mission which Marmaduke had established at Tilgaun; that Ommony was co-trustee with a red-headed American spinster named Hannah Sanburn who was head of the mission; and with a Tibetan Ringding Gelong Lama whom Ommony had never seen; that his enemy, Jenkins, had been appointed head of the forestry department and that Ommony had resigned.

As for Ommony, he said nothing; but pretty soon he got up and went to see his friend, John McGregor, his giant Irish wolf-hound Diana at heel. McGregor was head of the Secret Service. Their conversation developed interestingly. Jenkins had had Elsa hypnotized by the black-art swine Kananda Pal, robbed her of her mind and used her mental maladjustment as an excuse to break the engagement between them. Terry married her to save her and took her to a sacred place in the upper Abor country to have her cured. There the "Masters" live; there also is a sacred stone with magic properties. Terry and Elsa disappeared. That was twenty years ago.

McGregor also told Ommony that Miss Sanburn's adopted daughter had been robbed of a piece of crystal jade, the thief being murdered and the jade, as well as the adopted daughter, disappearing. Tin Lal, a Secret Service operative, recovered the jade and tried to sell it to Chutter Chand the jeweler. Through Chutter Chand's agency McGregor recovered the jade and since then had been importuned by a mysterious somebody to give it up. He thought that the jade might have something to do with the disappearance of the Terrys.

Suddenly hopeful of rescuing his sister, Ommony determined to inspect the Buddhist mission at Tilgaun as a pretext, then slip away on the desperate chance of penetrating the perilous unexplored upper Abor country, whence no stranger had ever returned.

Before starting he took the jade to his friend Chutter Chand, the jeweler. Chutter Chand said that in his opinion the jade had been broken off from a much larger piece and sensitized in very ancient times by a prehistoric race of superscientists, with the result that the stone reflects the whole of the holder's thought and character from the very day he was born. The jeweler added that he thought the "Masters" of the upper Abor guarded the forgotten secrets of the superscientists with the idea of letting them out a little at a time as the world was prepared to receive them. He was in abject terror, for a mysterious visitor had threatened him with death if he did not return the stone.

Just then an old Tibetan lama entered with his young *chela* or disciple in quest of the jade. He didn't get it. Ommony sent his wolf-hound Diana to trail them to their quarters when they left and himself made friends with the Hillman whom they had posted to shadow him. The Hillman said that his name was Dawa Tsering and that he came from Spiti, where they practise polyandry. The old lama, he said, was Tsiang Samdup, a name which startled Ommony. The disciple was Samding; "some call him San-fun-ho." Then he suddenly waxed uncommunicative and disappeared.

The dog Diana returned and led Ommony to the lamas' hiding-place, where Dawa Tsering tried to knife him in the dark. Diana bit the Hillman in the neck; Ommony took the knife away from him, and the Hillman cursed the lamas.

"They told me I could come to no harm if I obeyed them and said my prayers," he added. "Their magic is useless. Give me my knife and I will go back to the Hills."

Ommony gave Dawa Tsering the address of Mrs. Cornock-Campbell, where he was to be a guest at dinner, and told the Hillman to report there between ten and eleven that night, when the knife would be returned. Then he drove to McGregor's office, wrapped up the jade, addressed the package to Miss Sanburn at Tilgaun and entrusted it to McGregor's most trusted operative, the Eurasian, Aaron Macaulay, for delivery.

When Dawa Tsering showed up for his knife he told them that the jade had been found on a man from Abor, who had come to the Tilgaun mission for medical treatment and had died there. The stone was stolen from Miss Sanburn by a mission girl, whom the Secret Service operative Tin Lal had subsequently murdered. Tsiang Samdup had promised Dawa Tsering a great reward for recovering it. During their stay in Delhi Dawa Tsering noticed that the lama was visited a good deal by "actor people."

Just then a letter was shoved under the door, and the messenger disappeared before any one could see who he was.

THE letter, which was signed by Tsiang Samdup, referred vaguely to the "Middle Way" and asked Ommony to take the jade to Tilgaun, "which is one stage of the journey to the place whence it came."

Ommony, provoked at Tsiang Samdup because the lama would not take Ommony into his confidence, determined not to play into the other's hands by preceding him to Tilgaun, but to trail him there, thus finding out what the other was up to on the road. Also Ommony made up his mind to find that "Middle Way," and find it without the aid of the Secret Service. If the latter took a hand, Ommony well knew the Way would be closed to him. He knew of course that the phrase as the lama used it might refer to its religious significance but most likely—indeed almost surely—meant an actual secret trail through India.

He bullied Dawa Tsering into leaving the lama's service and entering his own; then, accompanied by the Hillman and Diana, he departed to visit Benjamin the Jew, a merchant and money lender to whom he had once done a very great favor. Moved by gratitude, the merchant told him much. He learned first, that the lama "for certain reasons" was planning to take a troupe of actors north.

Then too he wormed it out of Benjamin that for the past fifteen years or more the merchant had been Tsiang Samdup's Delhi agent. The lama, it seems, always paid his bills in small bars of solid gold.

Finally after an enormous emotional struggle Benjamin confessed under seal of utter confidence that Tsiang Samdup's traffic with him was largely concerned with smuggling friendless little European girls—seven had been smuggled already—up into the lamaist country and with buying supplies for them. From Delhi they went up by the "Middle Way."

Ommony was shocked—disgusted—and even more determined to see this thing through. Seeing the contempt in Ommony's manner, Benjamin offered to help him into the Abor country, where Ommony could see for himself that neither Benjamin nor the lama had done anything but good for the little girls. This could easily be accomplished, because Maitraya, the leader of the lama's troupe of actors, was in Benjamin's debt. So Ommony disguised himself as a Bhat-Brahman—a caste of Brahman so high that it was beyond the reach of caste—and as such was introduced to Maitraya, under the name of Gupta Rao. Under protest Maitraya took "Gupta Rao" into his troupe as leading actor.

This business being arranged, the two actors drove off to meet the lama and his *chela*, who were attending the birthday party of Vasantasena, a courtezan who wielded more power secretly than a dozen maharaja did openly. There Ommony was surprized to learn that indirectly the piece of jade had passed from Aaron Macaulay's hands into those of Vasantasena. What a marvelous spy system the lama controlled! he reflected.

Vasantasena held out the jade temptingly.

"Give me your *chela* in exchange," she coaxed.

"No," replied the *chela* in a voice like a golden gong.

Vasantasena's eyes flashed, and her mood changed into savagery like a stirred snake's. She flung the stone at the lama straight and hard. He secreted it in his bosom imperturbably.

"Go," she ordered hoarsely. "You—and you—and you, dogs of actors!"

Unhurriedly the four left and entered a strange carriage at the gate, with the servants of Vasantasena pursuing them. But the pursuit was not in order to do them harm, but to beseech forgiveness and to beg them to accept gifts from their mistress, that her sacrilegious action might not prove ill-omened. However, their gifts and cries were ignored, and in silence the four drove off.

THEY drove off to a Tibetan cloister and rehearsed the play, which proved somewhat akin to the European medieval morality play and apparently had been written by the lama with the idea of making the people vaguely dissatisfied with British rule. The *chela's* acting and delivery outshone that of Maitraya, who had been engaged as the star.

That evening a caravan of elephants and camels took the troupe, together with a number of unidentified women, from Delhi to a destination which the lama abstained from revealing. Ommony, Dawa Tsering and Diana were guests—or prisoners; it was hard to tell which.

When they came to a halt Ommony resolved upon a showdown. Bluntly he told Tsiang Samdup who he was and demanded that the lama talk too. For answer Tsiang Samdup led Ommony along a long screened passageway that echoed to the laughter of women and bade him look through a slit in a wooden panel down on to the floor below.

IT WAS a surprizing room to discover close to mule and elephant stables, but not so surprizing as its occupants. The walls were hung with painted curtains and the floor was strewn with cushions on which Indian women, many of them high-caste ladies, sat chattering with girls who resembled no caste or tribe that Ommony had ever seen anywhere.

They were lively, full of laughter, young, but no more beautiful, as far as actual features went, than any gathering of

normally good looking women anywhere. Six or seven of them, if not Tibetans, were at any rate of part Mongolian origin; but Ommony counted fourteen who fitted into no mental pigeon-hole of races he had seen and studied.

In more than one way those fourteen and the Tibetans were all alike. They were dressed in the same loose, almost Greek, white cotton robes; they all wore stockings, which the native Indian women in the room did not wear; and they used more or less the same gestures, were alert with the same vivacity. But there the resemblance ended.

The fourteen were fair-complexioned; one had golden hair that hung in long plaits nearly to her waist; she would have looked like a German Gretchen, if it had not been for the dress and something else—something quite indefinable.

The whole proceedings, the whole scene, was like a weird figment of imagination. There was nothing natural about it, simply because it was too natural. It was not India. There were Moslem as well as Hindu ladies in the room, betraying no self-consciousness and no objection to one another's presence; and there were actually low-caste women, *sudras*,* chatting with the rest apparently on equal footing. True, there was no food being passed around, but every other caste rule seemed to be forgotten or deliberately flouted; yet there was no sign of self-consciousness or strain.

Except for the rainbow costumes of the Indian ladies that filled the room with color and the fact that they sat on cushions on the floor, it was more like a European or American gathering, there was such natural ease displayed and freedom from conventional restraint. They were talking Urdu, a few of them with difficulty, but it was next to impossible to catch the conversation from the gallery because there was so much of it—so many chattering and laughing all at once. Nevertheless, and in spite of the laughter, there was a deliberate air about it all, as if they were possessed by a purpose that was as serious as religion.

The fourteen girls in white kept glancing up at the gallery apparently expecting some sort of signal, so Ommony had plenty of opportunity to scan their features. He did not doubt they were the smuggled children Benjamin had spoken of, only there were fourteen instead of seven.

There were, therefore, other agents besides Benjamin. But the fact in no way simplified the mystery; rather it increased it. Their ages ranged at a guess from seventeen to twenty-three or twenty-four, thus allowing for the years elapsed, tallying with Benjamin's description near enough, and they had grown to wholesome looking womanhood. Not a trace of shyness. No awkwardness. No vulgarity. Not one symptom of forced manners or repression.

The whole thing was incredible; yet there they were. And who had educated them? The lama? That was more impossible than for a river to flow uphill; he might have made priggish nuns of them, or downright Tibetans, but not that. It began to be evident that there was something worth investigating in the Abor country, or wherever else the lama kept his secrets.

Maitraya's appraisal of the girls had been utterly wide of the mark. They were attractive, yes; but not the sort of women that a wandering Don Juan falls in love with. Many of the Hindu and Moslem ladies were a great deal prettier, and looked a great deal likelier to stray from the orthodox pastures of love. There was not one of the girls in white, the Tibetans included, who appeared likely to put faith in anybody's blandishments. They looked forth out of fearless eyes that seemed to induce confidence in all the other women.

IT WAS the lama who at last cut short the flow of talk. Sitting still on the mat, where his head was not visible from below, he boomed a word in Tibetan, as commanding as the gong that brings sea engines to a halt, and there was instant silence as in an aviary when the chattering birds are frightened.

Whatever he might be, the old man knew what drama meant—and discipline. He whispered to Samding, and the *chela*, opening a swinging door in the front of the gallery, walked down a carpeted flight of steps to the floor below.

Language lacks a word for what he actually did. Seen even from above, and from behind, his descent of those steps was a rhythm of exquisite movement, in its way as subtle as the motion of wind-blown grass, and as loaded with the consciousness of abstract beauty. So Apollo may have

*Sudra: the lowest of the four great Hindu castes, which in fact, although not always in theory, includes many of the merchant and artizan classes, and some agriculturists.

walked when he descended to awaken the glory of Greece. It was almost awful to watch. No human had a right to move so marvelously!

He was received in silence. He took from his breast the broken piece of jade that Ommony had lost and that the lama had recovered from the courtesan, and holding it in both hands on a level with his shoulders passed among them, pausing to let each woman in turn devour it with her eyes. Some of them appeared to fall into a state of superstitious rapture; others were curious; all were respectful almost to the point of worship. And the lama watched them through a slit in the swinging gate as if all destiny depended on the outcome, every tendon in him rigid; the neck-tendon stood out like a bow-string. Then suddenly, as if to calm himself, he took snuff and rubbed his nose violently with his thumb.

The *chela* said nothing, but the women were allowed to touch him and appeared to think the touch conferred a priceless boon. They laid a finger of the right hand on his shoulder as he passed, and one woman, a Moslem, who laid both hands on him and clung almost passionately, was quietly reproved for it by two of the girls in white.

"The game begins to look political," thought Ommony, watching the lama clean a snuff-filled nostril with a meditative forefinger. "Vasantasena—ummm! Now these women— I've always wondered why some genius didn't try to conquer India by winning the women first! They rule the country anyhow."

The lama just then looked as calculating as a medieval cardinal, but despite that air of playing a deep game for tremendous stakes, there was now something almost Puck-like in his attitude. Ommony noticed for the first time that his ears did not lie close to his head, were large and slightly pointed at the top. Seen sidewise in the rather dim light there was a faint suggestion about him of one of those gargoyles that survey the street from a cathedral roof—not revolting, but distinctly mischievous. He was even more interesting to watch than the proceedings on the floor below.

Suddenly the lama spoke again. When he did that his leathery throat moved like a pelican's swallowing a big fish, and the noise that came out was hardly human—startling—so abrupt that it completely broke the sequence of all other sounds. It monopolized attention. In the ensuing silence he sat back, took snuff again, and seemed to lose all interest in the proceedings.

But to Ommony the interest increased. The girls in white threw black cloaks over their shoulders. The Hindu and Moslem women smothered themselves in the impenetrable veils without which it is pollution to face men-folk out of doors; and all of them, in groups of three or four, each little group in charge of one of the lama's female family, who shielded their faces in masked hoods that formed part of the black cloaks, departed toward the street.

There was no doubt that they did go to the street; a door opened on to a vestibule, and Ommony was able to see the sunlight through a street door at its farther end. He caught a glimpse of carriage wheels, and heard the pawing of more than one fly-bitten horse.

Samding returned up the steps and gave the piece of jade to the lama, who stowed it somewhere in his bosom without glancing at it. Ommony watched the *chela* narrowly. Was he a European boy? There was something in the clean strong outline of his face and in the lithe, athletic figure that might suggest it. But he was too abstract looking—altogether too impersonal and, the word was as vague as the impression Ommony was trying to fix in his mind, too fascinating. No European youngster could have looked as he did without stirring resentment in whoever watched. Samding aroused in the beholder only admiration and an itching curiosity.

CHAPTER XVII

DIANA REHEARSES A PART

THE LAMA'S STORY

O ye who look to enter in through Discipline to Bliss,
Ye shall not stray from out the Way, if ye remember this:
Ye shall not waste a weary hour, nor hope for Hope in vain,
If ye persist with will until self-righteousness is slain.
If through the mist of mortal eyes, deluded, ye discern
That ye are holier than these, ye have the whole to learn!
If ye are tied with tangled pride because ye learn the Law,
Know then, your purest thoughts deny the Truth ye never saw!
If ye resent in discontent the searchlight of reproof,
In hooded pride ye stand aside, at sin's not Soul's behoof!

Each gain for self denies the Self that knows the self is vain;
Who crowns accomplishment with pride must build the whole again!
But if, at each ascending step, more clearly ye perceive
That he must kill the lower will who would the world relieve
And they are last who would be first, their effort thrown away;
Be patient then, and persevere. Ye tread the Middle Way!

THE moment the last woman had vanished from the room the lama let Samding help him to his feet and clucked, snapping his fingers to Diana. She glanced at Ommony; he nodded, immensely curious, and she trotted to the lama's side as matter-of-factly as if she had known him all her life.

Dogs, according to Ommony, identify themselves with their master, and then, instead of forming their own opinions, either of people or events, detect the subconscious knowledge of their master sooner than his own conscious mind is able to interpret it; which, if true, would account for more than meets the eye.

True or not, Ommony had not known this to fail in Diana's case; he had observed that when she liked a man at once, eventually he had always liked him; friends of his whom she mistrusted turned out in the end to be false ones. Subsequent searching of memory seemed to establish that in every instance his own first impressions of those individuals, although subsequently smothered by a host of considerations, had been correct and had been correctly divined by the dog.

It was nothing that one could prove, any more than a man can prove that he is awake and not dreaming, but a course of exactly repeated coincidences becomes convincing, and Ommony, setting down Diana's behaviour on the credit side of the lama's balance, watched.

The lama and the *chela* went down to the room below, taking Diana with them. The *chela* spread out the mat, rearranged it in accordance with the lama's instructions, and the two sat down on it facing the balcony, conversing in low tones, evidently waiting for something preordained to happen. Diana sniffed around the room, inspecting cushions curiously, but they took no apparent notice of her. After a minute or two she sat down and looked bored.

Instantly the lama called to Ommony—"Can you cause the dog to open her mouth, from where you are, without speaking?"

Ommony stood up, his head and shoulders visible above the rail, and seeing him Diana pricked an ear. The trick was simple enough; ever since she was a puppy she had always dropped her jaw when he held up a finger at her; by education, for his own amusement, he had simply encouraged and fixed a habit. Her mouth opened, closed, and opened wide again.

Samding laughed delightedly, but the lama very seriously beckoned to Diana to come nearer and she obeyed at a nod from Ommony. She wanted to sit on the mat, but the lama would not allow that; he pushed her away and she squatted down facing the balcony, watching Ommony, awaiting orders.

"Now again!" said the lama.

Ommony raised his finger. The ear went up, the mouth opened and stayed open until the finger was lowered.

The lama was as pleased as a child with a toy. He called to Ommony to repeat the trick a dozen times, and Ommony added to it by making Diana sit up on her haunches; she would have been satisfied to go through all her tricks, but a Tibetan entered through the door the woman had used, midway of the long wall, facing, but on a lower level, the upper door through which the lama had led Ommony to the gallery. The lama froze into immobility and Samding followed suit.

There entered a man whom Ommony knew from his photographs—Prabhu Singh, the almost middle-aged but younger son of a reigning raja. He knew him well by reputation—had admired him in the abstract because he was notorious for independence and for fair, intelligent, outspoken and constructive criticism of foreign rule. He was said to be an intimate of Ghandi and was, in consequence, about as much appreciated by the ruling powers as a hornet at a tea party.

He was tall, lean, lithe, big-eyed under a plain silk turban and extremely simply dressed in tussore stuff that showed every line of his athletic figure—not very dark-skinned—clean-shaven except for a black mustache. He wore no jewelry, strode bare-footed with manly dignity to a point midway between the lama and the door, bowed low, and stood still. Diana went up and sniffed him. He showed surprize,

but laid his hand on the dog's head and rubbed her ear.

"Peace be with you. Peace perfect you in all her ways," the lama boomed.

"And to you, my father, peace," he answered. "Was it well done? Was anything lacking for your comfort? Have my servants failed in anything? Were there enough elephants?"

"It is all good," said the lama.

"And the mission succeeded?"

"The first part."

The lama's hand went into his bosom and produced the piece of jade. Prabhu Singh approached to the edge of the mat, received the jade into his hands, and stepped back to examine it, holding it to the light from a window. He did not appear to have any superstitious reverence for it, but handled it as if it were a work of art, rare and valuable.

"I am glad," he said simply after about two minutes, handing it back to the lama, who returned it to his bosom. Up to that point Prabhu Singh had taken no apparent notice of the *chela*, who sat motionless; but Ommony could see through the slit in the panel that the *chela's* eyes were missing nothing.

"San-fun-ho!" said the lama suddenly; and the *chela* stood up on the mat.

Was the stage-name his real one? The mystery increased. Prabhu Singh's attitude underwent an instant change. He became embarrassed. He bowed three times with much more reverence than he had shown the lama, and when the *chela* smiled the lineal descendant of a hundred kings was as nervous as a small boy being introduced to a bishop.

Samding said something to him that Ommony could not catch, and the murmured answer seemed to be no more than a conventional formula of politeness. The *chela* was as perfectly at ease as if he had been receiving the homage of princes all his life.

Prabhu Singh bowed again three times and retreated backward, stumbling against Diana and recovering his balance awkwardly. He appeared almost physically frightened; yet he was famous on polo fields from end to end of India, and was notorious for speaking his mind bluntly to viceroys, at real risk of personal liberty. His back to the door at last, he made his escape with better grace, recovering presence of mind and remembering to salute the lama.

THE moment the door shut the lama turned on Samding and rebuked him in such swift excited language that Ommony could hardly make head or tail of it. The language was Tibetan, and he was too far away to catch more than occasional sentences; but it seemed that the lama was angry because Samding had not put the visitor at ease.

The talk was like a Chinaman's, rising and falling as the sound of water hurrying over a gravel bottom.

"That is only vanity—self-approval . . . Worshippers are mockers . . . turned your head . . . I would rather see you pelted with stones . . . better for you and for them . . . break the shell of the egg before the chicken hatches . . . *schlappkapp!* (whatever that meant) . . . dirt under your feet will some day cover your grave . . . all these years and yet you know so little . . . if you are going to fail you had better not begin . . . presumption . . ."

It was a wonder of a discourse. Samding listened standing for a while, then sat down cross-legged—off the mat—facing the lama, head bowed humbly, not once moving until Diana came and sniffed his neck to find out what the matter was.

That stopped the lama's flow of speech. He glanced up at the gallery and called to Ommony in a normal tone of voice, as if he had entirely forgotten the whole incident of Prabhu Singh's visit and the rebuke and all connected with it.

"Now again, my son. Make the dog do the acting again."

Samding resumed his position on the mat at the lama's right hand; he, too, seemed to dismiss the lecture as if it had never taken place; and Ommony, directing from the gallery, made Diana go through all her tricks. They were not extraordinary for an intelligent dog, except that she never had to be told twice and that most of them were done in response to signals. The lama merely nodded; none of the tricks seemed to impress him half as much as the first, the easiest of all. He insisted on her opening her mouth again and again and at last he and Samding chuckled together over it as if it were the greatest joke that ever happened.

Still chuckling, they got up and left the room by the door leading to the street, taking the mat with them and locking the door as they went out. No explanation; not a word to Ommony as to what was expected of him; not even a backward glance at the gallery to suggest that they had him in mind.

Ommony sat still for a while; then, whistling Diana, he made his way to the gallery door, found that open, and proceeded to explore; but he found all the other doors along the passage locked, except the one at the end that opened into the room assigned to himself.

He looked through the window into the compound, where there was all kinds of noise and confusion. Four men were trying to throw a mule and several other mules had broken loose; an elephant was lying on its back near a water butt while two *mahouts* scrubbed its belly; and two bull camels were fighting with everything except their tails, while twenty onlookers heaped humorous advice on rather bored looking experts, who were watching for a chance to rope the brutes by the leg and separate them.

And in the midst of all that riot, with the sun pouring down on them and crows and sparrows hopping about among them, Maitraya and his troupe sat on boxes, repeating their lines to one another. The box nearest Ommony, on which a woman sat, announced in bold red stencil that it came from New York and had once held a mechanical calculator.

It appeared that the devil's part already had been written. Maitraya held a small scroll in addition to his own, and was trying to teach the lines to Dawa Tsering, who was disposed to believe he could play the devil better if left to his own resources.

"I tell you, a devil is devilish!" he shouted. "A devil is like one of those bull camels—you never know what he'll do next! Or like a mule—you have to look out for his teeth and heels! This devil of yours is like a pretty gentleman. Here, let me show you how to act the devil!"

But Maitraya stuck to it, patiently correcting the Hillman's mispronunciation of the Urdu words, sitting silent through explosions of ill temper, and resuming the lesson as soon as each blast of rebellion had squandered itself. Something—some one—had wrought a miracle in Maitraya, or else the man's former conceit had been only a phase through which he had to pass before settling down to business; he was displaying as much patience as if Dawa Tsering were his son.

Catching sight of Ommony through the window, he called to him to come out and take part in the rehearsal; but the door was still locked, and though he could have climbed through the window easily enough Ommony preferred discretion. He hardly liked to confess that he was locked in, not knowing what effect that news might have on Maitraya. After a moment's hesitation he excused himself on religious grounds

"I must recite the *mantras*."

Even Maitraya, possessed by an almost absolute religious cynicism, respected that Brahman's privilege. Himself forbidden to recite the *mantras* on pain of curses too frightful to contemplate, and in his bolder moments scurrilously critical, he nevertheless touched both hands to his forehead, symbolizing that he was as dirt beneath a Brahman's feet, and Ommony was left to his own meditations, which were mixed, amused and mystified in turn.

His thoughts drifted to politics. Was the lama planning revolution, to be brought about by propaganda among women, with the aid of such strong independents as Prabhu Singh? It had begun to look like it. But if so, what part was the *chela* to play? And why had Prabhu Singh been so embarrassed in the *chela's* presence?

His thoughts were interrupted by a knock on the door behind him. It was almost as if Providence had answered. The *chela* came in. He had changed his clothes again and was in the same snuff-colored robe in which Ommony first saw him in Chutter Chand's back room. His face was an enigma—a mask with a marvelous smile on it; but the eyes, to Ommony, suggested excitement, or it might have been extremely keen amusement; at any rate, some strong emotion was shining through the self-controlled exterior. The remarkable thing was, that the youngster's calm did not suggest fanatical asceticism, or conceit. He seemed human, curious and not unfriendly.

Diana's tail thumped on the floor. Flies buzzed in and out through the window. There was nothing in the situation to cause nervousness, and yet Ommony confessed to himself that he did feel nervous. He felt an inclination to shudder; the sort of

inclination that forewarns a man of something that his eyes can not see. He spoke first, purposely in English, hoping to catch the *chela* off guard:

"Maitraya has suggested that those young women who are with the party are your wives. That seems improbable. Tell me the truth about it."

If eyes mean anything, the *chela* understood. If eyes tell the truth, he was laughing. No muscle of his face moved. He pretended to assume that the words were some form of greeting, and answered in kind, in Tibetan, then broke into Urdu:

"Tsiang Samdup sends a blessing. He is unwilling that you should speak of what occurred this morning."

"You mean of the performance of the dog?" asked Ommony, hardly succeeding in pretending to the *chela* that he really thought that was the meaning, but trying to look stupid.

But the *chela* appeared to be an expert in dealing with stupidity.

"Of *anything* that occurred."

Ommony chose another angle of assault:

"Whatever the holy lama wishes. Kindly tell him so. *As long as I am his guest*, I will be silent. Wait!"

The *chela* had started to go, but Ommony stepped between him and the door and stood with his back to it.

"Don't be alarmed."

But the *chela* had only retreated a pace or two. Excepting that, he seemed hardly more than curious to know what would happen next. It was Ommony who felt uncomfortable.

"I want you to tell me," he said, "whether it was Tsiang Samdup or some one else who educated you and those young women."

The *chela*, still standing erect did not answer.

"Come on, tell me. There must be some one else besides the lama."

"Is that why you stand between me and the door?" the *chela* asked. The voice was ironic—amused.

Ommony tried emphasis:

"I won't let you go until you answer a few questions. Tell me——"

But the *chela* had already gone. He had crossed the room in three strides, laid a hand on the window ledge, and vaulted through, tucking his legs up neatly under his chin and landing almost noiselessly on the veranda. He contrived the whole swift maneuver without a moment's loss of dignity, and walked away unruffled, not glancing behind him.

Ommony strode to the window, feeling cheap, wishing he had gone about things differently; he supposed it would take an interminable time now to establish himself in the *chela's* confidence; he had possibly totally ruined his chance of doing that. The *chela* was sure to go straight to the lama and tell him.

But there stood the lama, in the midst of the group of actors, with Samding already beside him; and apparently Samding was talking about the play to Maitraya. The lama seemed to be encouraging Dawa Tsering to rehearse his lines. They did not glance in Ommony's direction. But a minute or two later a Tibetan came and unlocked the door, and when Ommony stepped out under the veranda the lama turned and beckoned to him.

However, the lama had nothing to say. He led the entire troupe at once toward the elephant stalls, down a gangway between two of the big beasts, whom he saluted in passing as if they were human beings, and through a gate at the rear into an alley fifty yards long. The alley seemed to have been used as a sheep corral the preceding night; there were some loose boards that probably served to enclose it. Across its end ran a street, in which a dozen or more nondescript humans lounged in front of back doors. It was a back street; all the houses faced the other way, their rears an irregular jumble of yards and walls, with empty kerosene cans, rubbish heaps and faded cotton *purdahs** much in evidence.

The lama led straight across the street into a doorway, and down a long passage that admitted to the wings of a fair-sized theatre, almost modern in some of its details.

Some one had been busy, for the stage was set. A hideous backdrop had been almost concealed by branches up-ended, that gave a very good suggestion of a clump of trees; and in front of those, in mid-stage, was a wickerwork affair covered with cotton cloth that had been painted to look like the stone work of an old well; a beam with a rope thrown over it, supported on two uprights completed the illusion well enough. The flies had been very simply

*Purdah—curtain, veil; any kind of screen. Women who keep out of sight of men are known as *purdah-nashin*.

painted to resemble house corners at the end of a street, and the whole scene suggested the extreme fringe of a village, with the audience looking out through it toward the open country.

For a wonder, there was electric light, although none too much, and the switchboard was a mystery, painted red and labeled in English "Keep Away!"

At the rear of the theatre and along both sides was a balcony for women, screened off with narrow wooden slats that left openings about four inches square.

The orchestra pit was a platform, three feet lower than the stage, in full view of the audience. The musicians were already squatting there, Tibetans to a man; four were armed with *radongs;** four more had tomtoms; the remaining dozen were provided with stringed instruments. The *radongs* blew a fog-horn blare to greet the lama as he stepped on to the stage, and he smiled and bowed to acknowledge the compliment with such evident satisfaction that it appeared his eardrums after all had not been burst by the reverberation.

In the opposite wing, no longer in white or in stockings, protected by three stalwart Tibetans, who lounged in the flies, were the women of mystery. They were in costume, which so orientalized them that Ommony almost doubted recognition. For memory plays strange tricks; his took him back to the day when he and Benjamin had played a part at Chota Pegu and the nautch girls had been wild with inquisitive mischief—ready to betray the chief-priest at a nod. These girls now, in gauzy draperies, less naked, but as subtle in their motions, so resembled those nautch girls at first glance that he was not sure they were the same he had seen in the room among the Hindu ladies until he noticed that they laughed and chattered on a comparatively low note instead of a high-pitched dissonance.

THE lama clapped his hands and sat down inside the well, where he could see out through holes in the painted cloth. Then he told Ommony to make Diana sit down almost exactly in front of the well, and the rehearsal began at once, as if preordained from the beginning of time, the girls in their Indian costume mingling with the stage crowd, and so well versed in their part that they pushed the other actors into place, needing no direction by the lama.

Ommony had plenty of chance to observe some of them closely, for three had been told off to engage the *saddhu* in mock conversation during parts of the first act. One—the Gretchen-girl—put an offering into his begging-bowl. But though he missed his cue twice through trying to engage her in real, whispered conversation, he failed; she was as evasive as abstract thought—as apparently engaging and as actually distant as a day-dream. She turned every advance he made into an excuse for by-play for the imaginary audience's benefit, and all Ommony accomplished was to draw the lama's irony from behind the wall—

"Some *saddhus* hide lascivious hearts under robes of sanctity, but you are *supposed* to be one who has truly forsaken the pursuit of women, Gupta Rao!"

When the laugh that followed the rebuke had died down Ommony was still not sure of the Gretchen-girl's real nationality. He had tried her with English, French, German and two or three Indian languages, watching her face, but detecting no expression that suggested she had understood him.

As for the others, one might be a Jewess; but there are many well-bred women, for instance in Rajputana, and in Persia, who are fair-skinned and who resemble Jewesses in profile. Even fair hair was no proof of their origin; most eastern women, but by no means all, have dark hair.

The only really convincing evidence that they were Europeans was their behavior, and even that was offset by the fact that some of them were certainly Tibetans, whose manner was equally unembarrassed in the presence of men, yet equally free from familiarity.

The difference from their behavior and that of Maitraya's actresses grew more and more noticeable as the professionals became aware of an atmosphere to which they were utter strangers. They tried at first to imitate it; then grew resentful and sneered; resorting at last to low jests in loud whispers and attempts to scandalize by bold advances to the men, until at last the lama stood up in the well like a priest in a pulpit and beckoned those three women to come and stand in front of him.

"I could show you your secret hearts,"

*Radong—a sort of trumpet, very long, with the bell-shaped end set at an angle to the tube.

he said, in a kind voice that was much more withering than scorn, "and ye would die in horror at the sight. It is not good to slay, not even with the rays of truth. So I show you instead what ye *may* become."

Mildly, patiently, a little wearily, as if he had done the same thing very often, he included all his own mysterious family in a gesture that conveyed diffidence and hesitation.

"Life after life ye shall struggle with yourselves before ye shall become as these. And these are nothing—nothing to what ye *may* become. The road is long, and there are difficulties; but ye *must* face it. Take advantage of the moment, for it is easier to imitate than to find the way alone.

"Ye can not undo the past, nor can all the gods, nor He who rules the gods, undo it. But now, this moment, and the next one, and the next, forever, ye yourselves by thought and act create the very hair's-breadths of your destiny— Now let us begin again, from the beginning."

They began again so meekened and subdued that for a while the first act suffered. But that was overcome by Diana, who produced such peals of laughter that the lama had difficulty in restoring order and had to reprimand the musicians for thrusting their heads above the level of the stage to watch. At a signal from Ommony standing near the wings, Diana's mouth opened and the lama from inside the well croaked words that sounded, even on the stage, as if the dog were speaking them.

When the shoemaker said, "Ah, if I were king!" Diana's mouth opened wide and the retort came from behind her—

"It *might* be better to be a dog like me and not worry so much!"

The illusion was perfect because everybody on the stage looked at the dog as if expecting her to speak; and the best of it was that Diana cocked an ear, put her head to one side, and was immensely interested.

In answer to the *saddhu's*, "How long will ye store up wrath against the day of reckoning?" there was put into Diana's mouth—

"For myself I bury bones, but jackals come in the night and make away with them."

When the king asked, "Is this your gratitude?" and the *saddhu* replied—"To whom? For what?" Diana's retort was:

"The *saddhu* is like the vermin on my back; he helps himself, but isn't grateful. And when he is scratched he just goes to another place."

Diana was easy to manage, and Ommony's signals, made with his right hand, were invisible from the front of the theatre on his left. But Dawa Tsering was a hard problem; he was supposed to be one of those wandering clown-fakirs who amuse and terrify village gatherings by alternately acting like idiots and pretending they are in communication with the underworld of demons and lost souls. He could neither remember his lines nor keep his head, but blundered in at the wrong cues and then laughed self-consciously. Ommony advised the lama to dispense with him altogether.

"Nay," said the lama. "All things are good in the proper place. There is a part he *can* play."

Whereat he ordered the stage set for the second act, which was a simple business. The flies reversed suggested a palace interior. Curtains at the rear concealed the greenery. The well was replaced by a carpeted dais with a large throne on top of it, inside which the lama could conceal himself quite easily. A few heaps of cushions and settees were carried on the stage, and while the change was being made the orchestra rehearsed amazing music.

Tomtoms, *radongs* and stringed instruments thundered, howled and jingled like a storm in the Himalayas, with the voices of a thousand disembodied spirits carrying on an argument in the teeth of wind and rain. It was stunning, weird, a sort of cataclysmic din foreboding marvelous events, but music, nevertheless, in every quarter-note of its disturbing harmonies.

CHAPTER XVIII

DIANA ADOPTS BUSKINS

He who would reform the world must first reform himself; and that, if he do it honestly, will keep him so employed that he will have no time to criticize his neighbor. Nevertheless, his neighbor will be benefited —even as a man without a candle, who at last discerns another's light—From the Book of the Sayings of Tsiang Samdup.

WORK. Ommony had been a worker all his days, but had never known the real meaning of the word until that afternoon. The lama, as placid as a

temple idol, as exacting as Fate, as tireless as time itself, kept everybody occupied. There was no return to the place across the street where the beasts of burden rested; the only pause between rehearsals was at noon, when food was brought in baskets and all except Ommony munched greasy *chupatties* in the wings; for him there was special food provided, brought by an ostensible Brahman and served behind a screen.

A Tibetan make-up man, a master craftsman, spread the tools of his trade on the stage behind the well and took every one in hand in turn under the lama's critical supervision. Even Diana had to be touched up; daubs of paint were smeared around her eyes to make them look huge and supernatural, and her ordinary gauntness was enhanced by dark streaks that made her ribs appear to stand out prominently.

Trunks full of costumes were dumped in the wings by methodical, matter-of-fact Tibetans, who seemed to have gone through the same performance scores of times and to know exactly what to do, and when, and how. They dressed the protesting actors more or less by main force, ignoring Maitraya's protests, pulling, adjusting, stitching, until every costume hung exactly as the lama said it should.

They provided Dawa Tsering with a devil-mask and a suit of dragon scales—then showed him himself in a mirror, which entirely solved that problem; he liked himself so well in the disguise that he could have acted Hamlet in it. But all he was required to do was to laugh like a fiend at intervals, and to dance on and off stage whenever the lama signaled from behind the well. He was supposed to be the spirit of the underworld who mocked men's efforts.

There was no supper; nobody remembered it. Rehearsals continued until they had to lower the curtain because the audience began to straggle in and squat on the matted floor in groups, munching betel nut.

The orchestra tuned up at once. Three quarters of an hour before the curtain was supposed to rise the house was crowded to suffocation. Stunned by the music, which crashed and blared arresting heraldry of doom or something like it—and nothing fascinates as much as doom foretrumpeted—the audience forgot to talk.

When the curtain went up slowly, as if raised by the last resounding boom of the *radongs*, there was utter silence, in which the thrill behind the women's gallery grating could almost be felt in the wings.

And at the very last minute, before the king walked on, the lama, from behind the well, signaled unexpectedly to Dawa Tsering to laugh like a ghoul and dance across the stage. It was inspiration. In a country that believes implicitly in devils, that, following the cataclysmic music, produced the perfect state of mind in which to watch the play; when Maitraya wallked on he was heard with almost agonized attention.

There was not a gasp from the audience until it was Diana's turn to speak, when the lama croaked her line so comically that even the actors laughed, and, presumably because the gods who guard coincidence approved, she put her head to one side and cocked an ear at the audience.

It brought the house down. It was so exactly timed to break suspense; the marvel that a dog should speak was so astonishing; that an earthquake after that could hardly have called the crowd's attention to itself.

Every spoken word and every move was watched as if earth's destiny depended on the actors' lips, and Diana's three short speeches were received as if some god in the form of an animal were on the stage. When she had spoken about vermin the lama tickled her with a straw and she scratched herself; shrill laughter from behind the women's grille gave evidence that not a gesture of her left hind foot was missed. When the curtain came down at the end of the prolog the applause outthundered the orchestra.

"It succeeds!" announced Maitraya, strutting across the stage in the way of the scene shifters. "I told you so! I said it would! Trust me to know! Acting—good acting—technique can accomplish anything!"

The lama recognized familiar symptoms and was prompt. He gathered all the actors close around him in the wings and what he said was aimed straight at Maitraya, although he appeared to be watching Dawa Tsering through the corner of his eye:

"That which is not excellent is no good. There shall be no second act, unless I can be sure of more attention to my signals. I

am disappointed. If we can do no better before such an audience as this, what could we hope to do in the large cities?"

Dawa Tsering nearly burst the devil mask with indignation.

"Thou!" he exploded. "Go back to thy monastery! *I* will entertain these princes and princesses! Hah! This is the greatest success there ever was!"

"You will not be needed," said the lama; and at a sign from him, as if they had known from the first what to expect, three Tibetans seized Dawa Tsering and led him away to a small room at the rear where his roars of protest were inaudible.

That was all that was needed. Even the vainglorious Maitraya forced himself into a careful frame of mind, and the second act began as the first had done, with everybody striving to deliver each line as the lama wished it.

Quite early in the second act the girls came on to dance and entertain the king's court. They were preceded by mysterious music, pulsing with a tomtom underthrob that made the audience breathe in time to it and sway unconsciously.

They floated on to the stage, bare-footed, swinging so perfectly in unison that each seemed to reflect the other. Lower lights produced a filmy, other-world effect. What little sound they made was swallowed by the pulsing subdued music, until one *radong* boomed an arresting note and they began to sing, never changing the dance step, weaving in and out and around and around as reflections mirrored in the water weave interminably.

Song, step and dimness were all in harmony. There was one mysterious, monotonous refrain that held a hint of laughter, and yet such sadness as is felt when the wild fowl cry across treeless wastes under a rainy sky.

And there was no more than enough of it to make the audience feel that it had not had enough—no encore, although the stifling theatre became a pandemonium of acclamation and the king's next speech had to be twice repeated from the throne. The lama, underneath the throne, insisted on it, lest the audience should miss one word of the thought-laden lines.

Diana had only one line in the second act. When the king, worried and perplexed by the ignorant disputing of his courtiers, exclaimed:

"Oh, who is wise enough to tell these idiots what to do?"

Diana walked up to the throne, turned at a signal from Ommony to face the audience, and from under the throne the lama croaked:

"A wise *dog* chooses its own master and obeys him. It saves lots of trouble!"

Then she walked off, swaying her long tail contentedly as if she had solved the riddle of the sphinx. Because of the heat, that made the grease-paint on the actors' faces run, her tongue lolled out and she seemed to be grinning in response to the applause as she vanished into the wings.

About midway through the second act Dawa Tsering was released and allowed to resume his ghoulishness, now somewhat chastened by conviction that after all he was not indispensable. There was nothing prearranged about his entrances; whenever a line fell flat or the action seemed to drag a little the lama signaled for the devil to dance on and arouse laughter.

He was particularly useful when Maitraya remembered he was an actor instead of acting the part of a king; the devil was immediately summoned then to take the conceit out of him by burlesque antics.

THERE was nothing in the play an audience could misinterpret, for it mirrored their own melancholy to them and their own confusion, while Samding in the Chinese robes of San-fun-ho laughed at it triumphantly, his golden voice repeating lines that suggested, hinted, vaguely alluded to a way out of all the difficulties that *he* knew all about, even if nobody else did.

All through the second act Samding's lines were mockingly destructive, as one actor after another, from king to *saddhu*, tortured imagination with his own ideas of how to make the world convenient to live in. Between them they proposed almost every solution that has ever passed current in the realm of politics, and the Saddhu seasoned the stew with peppery religious nostrums; but when, before the curtain fell, they all decided they were better off as shoemakers and goatherds Samding still mocked them. Nevertheless, there was a hint in his last line of a solution if they chose to look for it:

"Ye mortals, there is no success in jealousy. There is no comfort in complaint.

Ye win no excellence by finding fault."

The applause made the curtain swing and sway, but it did not drown the orchestra for quite so long as after the first act. It changed into a buzz of conversation, syncopated, rising from a low note to a higher one in choppy sound-waves of expectancy; and when the curtain rose on the scene by the well at dawn there was silence in which the mouse-note creaking of a door moved by a draught of hot air sounded like whip cracks.

The rising sun would hardly have passed muster with a western audience. It was a thing of gilded wood, on which the strongest electric light available was focussed from the wings, but to the eastern mind, long versed in symbolism, it was intelligible and the fact that mystic signs were painted on its face enhanced its effect.

There was no need to tell any one that San-fun-ho had used the magic jade at dawn to restore everyone to his original condition. There they all were, grouped before the well, with the dancing girls costumed as members of a village crowd and some Tibetans in the background helping to swell the number.

The whole of that last act belonged to San-fun-ho, who stood before the well with the magic jade in his right hand and, with the rising sun behind him, revealed the mystery of hope and courage. The jade gleamed like a living thing whose light came from within. His voice was like a peal of magic bells rung by the gods who keep the secrets of the dawn. His face was lighted with reassuring laughter. His manner was as one who had experienced all emotions and had conquered fear.

It was a long speech; its delivery required ten minutes, but the audience received it as the East receives a benediction always, straining breathlessly to catch the subtleties of meaning, preferring allegories and a proverb now and then to meat and drink.

"— Does dawn die? Nay, it passes on— it lives forever. Dawn *is* dawn, and never changes. Discontent *is* discontent; its fruits are of the elements of discontent—all bitter—none can sweeten them. Who wallows in the mire of jealousy, and blames another for the want he feels, may load his bins a-burst with golden goods, but he shall know *more* smarting jealousy, and ache with gnawing wants he never guessed.

"But hope—is hope not sweet? And is the fruit of sweetness bitter? Nay! I tell you, Hope is a creative force whose limitless dimensions lie within the boundary of each existing minute. Irresistible, Hope's magic is accomplished *now*. It comprehends no lapse of time. Nay! Instant are its dawn, its noon and its accomplishment! Hope, if it is true hope, fills the mind, affording malice and deceitful dread no room. Hope lives in action. *All* the elements of hope are deeds done now!

"Deeds—the very echoes are the fruit of deeds! One stone laid on another in Hope's name is greater service to the gods than all the pomp of conquest and the noise of prayer! A deed—who measures it? Who knows the limits of a mended wheel or reckons up the leagues it shall lay underfoot? what burdens it shall bear? whose destiny it shall await and serve? A newborn Krishna may descend into the world and ride on it to glories such as earth has never known!

"O people, ye have overpraised calamity! Too much ye have considered night; and not enough have ye observed the dawn! Your hope has died because ye starved it like a pot-bound plant within the shell of envy, in the drought of greed! Too truly ye have longed to gain and to possess; too little ye have hoped to add one gift to each gift-laden moment as it comes!

"Lay one stone on another, and give thanks! Add one deed to another and sing praises to the lords of tide and time who measure the ant's labors and record kings' idleness! Sing! Your very song shall vibrate in the universe when ye return to earth a thousand lives from now!"

The orchestra stole its way into his last half-dozen sentences and, as he finished, burst into the splendid opening bars of a hymn that was already ancient when the hills were young. Conquering, it sounded, rising, overturning, splendid with the bloom of life and hope that knows it is immortal.

And how those girls, and the trained Tibetan chorus massed behind them, sang! They swept the audience along with them into a surging spate of sound whose melody was like the rolling wonder of long rivers.

The curtain came down amid such deafening applause that not even the *radongs* could blare above the thunder of it and the lama had to shout like a mountaineer to make himself heard behind the scenes.

Ommony had seen no messenger arrive, no consultation held, but the word the lama shouted rang with a strange note of anxiety, and though the audience was yelling for more song, and to see the dog again, the stage and the wings took on the aspect of a stricken camp—all haste, all running to and fro, but strangely no confusion.

Ommony was seized and stripped of his *saddhu's* costume—left to dress himself in Brahman clothes as best he might, while Maitraya fought against a similar indignity with as much effect as if he were a scarecrow struggling with a Himalayan wind. The other actors threw their costumes off before the wardrobe men could get to them; and before they could pull on their ordinary clothes the framework of the well and every detail of stage furniture had vanished.

The girls had disappeared almost before the echo of the lama's warning cry had ceased, and within five minutes from the time the curtain came down Ommony found himself alone in the wing with Diana and Dawa Tsering, who wanted to stay there and brag of his performance.

"I have made up my mind I will be an actor, Gupta Rao! I am good at it! Did you hear how they laughed when I showed myself? That play would have failed but for me! Ha-hah! The lama knew it too! He had to tell his lousy Tibetans to let me out of that room back there, so that I might come and save the day!"

Ommony did not waste time to disillusion him, but even so they were nearly caught by a tide of men who tried to surge in through the stage door, sweating, laughing, shouting questions, wanting to know when the next performance would take place, wanting to see the dog and to hear her talk again, demanding to be shown the Chinese actor and to know whether he was really Chinese—above all, when would the next performance be?

Ommony had to shove his way through the midst of them, holding Diana by the collar and hustling Dawa Tsering, who wanted to stop and wallow in flattery. Not even loud commands to keep their unclean fingers off a "twice-born" served to keep the crowd from getting in the way; and they would have followed across the street to the elephant stable if Ommony had not thought of telling them that the dog must be fed before she could possibly go to the temple of Siva and speak a couple of *mantras* from the street near the temple porch. (It was quite safe to mention the temple of Siva; there is always one where there are Hindus.) They stampeded toward the temple to take up good positions, and only a few small boys saw Ommony, Dawa Tsering and the dog go into the elephant compound by way of the alley, which was full of sheep among which they had to thread their way.

The pitch dark compound was in quiet confusion. There were camels being loaded, and the elephants were all in line beside the balcony, from whose upper deck the girls, already masked in black, were stepping down like goblins into the curtained howdahs. Ommony found the lama, Samding beside him, standing near the last elephant of the line; and as he drew near, some one whose outline suggested Prabhu Sing, returned thanks for the lama's blessing and disappeared into the darkness.

"Why the hurry?" Ommony demanded. "They came crowding to the door to insist on another performance. Why not stay and give it?"

"My son," the lama answered, with the slightest trace of tartness in his voice, "no course is good unless there are seven reasons for it, even as no week is whole that has not seven days. You may ride on that elephant—that third one. May peace ride with you."

CHAPTER XIX

A MESSAGE FROM MISS SANBURN

He who is wise is careful not to seem too virtuous, lest they who dislike virtue should exert unceasing energy to demonstrate that he is viler than themselves. True virtue suffers from advertisement.—From the Book of the Sayings of Tsiang Samdup.

A TUMULT in the street announced that Ommony's ruse had only gained a moment's respite. The night was alive with curiosity; a voice that bellowed like a foghorn asked who the actors were, when they would perform again, whether San-fun-ho was a mahatma, and if so, which of all the pantheon he favored. Another voice shouted for San-fun-ho to come out and speak.

But it appeared the lama had foreseen all that. The bleating sheep gave notice that the barrier was down and the crowd swarming into the alley. But a string of elephants to all appearance loaded filed down the alley from the compound and the crowd had to retreat; those elephants paraded

through the town streets, drawing the crowd after them, and there were no spectators when the gate at the opposite end of the compound opened and the lama's long procession—camels, elephants and this time mules as well—swayed toward open country.

The same Tibetan shared a howdah with Ommony, Dawa Tsering and Diana, and was just as uncommunicative as before, but when Ommony complained of the heat he made no objection to pulling aside the curtains sufficiently to afford a glimpse of sky. So, although there was no moon, and it was not possible to watch the shadowy landscape, the polestar crossed the line of vision now and then and by keeping his eye on that whenever possible Ommony could guess the direction roughly.

They were traveling northeastward; but as he did not know the name of the town they had left behind the information was of little value. They crossed a railway line, for he heard an engine whistle and had to cling to the howdah when the elephant climbed an embankment and descended on the far side; and once there was hollow thunder underfoot as the procession crossed a long bridge.

The pace was much more leisurely than on the first night, and there were fewer interruptions; but twice out of the darkness, once in the gloom of overhanging trees, and once where the crimson glow of a bonfire shone through the howdah curtains, muttered orders came from men on foot and the direction changed.

About two hours before dawn a halt was called in what appeared to be some kind of royal park; there was a wall all around it and there were peculiar walled subdivisions, but nothing to show who the owner might be. The elephants, camels and mules returned by the way they had come, leaving the baggage heaped in a clearing between trees.

Somebody shouted a long series of incomprehensible commands, repeating it all three times, and Ommony was hurried away to a tent in a triangular space with a stone wall on either hand and trees in front. There was a good bed in the tent, and a generous meal all ready on a linen-covered table. For Dawa Tsering there was a mattress under the tent fly; and for Diana a prodigious heap of rice and bones near some sacks spread out for her to sleep on—they were beef bones, which hardly looked as if the owner of the place were a Hindu. No owner put in an appearance; there was nothing, except that detail of the beef bones, to suggest what kind of man he might or might not be.

When Ommony had finished eating Samding emerged out of the darkness like a ghost and stood framed in the tent opening, looking like a cameo against the sky.

"Tsiang Samdup sends a blessing," he said calmly. "He requests that you will not leave this enclosure. Kindly do not go beyond the trees."

He disappeared again. It was not until he had gone that it occurred to Ommony the language he had used was English. Speaking, thinking in two languages concurrently, occasionally listening to a third, one does not identify them without an effort.

For a minute or two Ommony sat still, trying to recall the *chela's* voice, intonation and accent; it seemed to him that if the words had not been perfectly pronounced he would have noticed instantly that the *chela* was talking English, not Urdu. He recalled the exact words one by one. "Blessing," "enclosure" and "the" were key-words that would inevitably have betrayed a foreign accent had there been one; as far as he could remember all three words had been stressed exactly as a well-educated Englishman would use them; he was sure there had been no accent on the vowel in "the"—a shibboleth that everlastingly betrays the Asian born.

"I'll swear that youngster is European. I'll pretty nearly swear he's English," he thought—and then laughed at himself.

No European, certainly no English youth, ever had it in him to seem so saintly and at the same time to be so inoffensive. There would have been an almost irresistible impulse to kick any western youth who dared to look as virtuous as that. One did not want to kick Samding.

Then again, he himself was utterly fagged out from physical strain and lack of sleep. He could hardly keep his eyes open. Why then was Samding not even more tired? He had worked harder, had presumably had less sleep, and had traveled in the same discomfort. Even the Tibetans, who appeared to have been chosen for physique as well as their amenity to discipline, were going about their duties in a sort of weary

dream. Dawa Tsering was already snoring on his mattress under the fly. Yet the *chela* had seemed alert and in full command of all his faculties.

Ommony turned Diana loose to roam wherever she pleased; no inhibition had been laid on her. He hoped natural canine curiosity might lead her to make new acquaintances who in some way would help to throw light on the mystery; for as he threw himself on the bed to sleep the whole thing seemed a deeper mystery than ever. Was it propagana intended to foist Samding on the country as a new mahatma? A political mahatma, who should bring on revolution? If so, why the sudden flight? What could be the advantage of creating intense enthusiasm and then running away from it?

He was awakened late in the morning by a man who removed the dishes and spread a fresh meal on the linen-covered table. The man was some one he had not seen before, as silent as an oiled automaton. Diana was coiled up asleep on her sacking. Dawa Tsering, smelling hot food, awoke with a start to devour it, and it was he who first noticed the silence.

"Gupta Rao, we are ——"

HE LEFT his bowl of food and ran to the trees that screened the end of the enclosure, peered between them, and came hurrying back with a grin on his face.

"It is true. They have gone and left us!"

Ommony's obstinate jaw came forward with a jerk. An insult from the lama's lips could not have produced a tenth of the effect on him.

"—— him after all!" he muttered "I admitted I was spying. If he'd simply asked me to clear out I'd have gone and waited for him at Tilgaun. I'll be blowed, though, if I'll let up now. I'll trace him if I have to——"

He set his jaw obstinately and sat down on the bed, glancing in the dog's direction, wondering how much she had seen in the night and wishing she could really talk. She was curled up, fast asleep, but his eye detected something on her collar. He called her, and removed a piece of paper that had been wired to the brass ring; it was twisted and soiled, but the writing on the inside was perfectly legible, English, and done in heavy quill pen strokes that he believed were the lama's, although there was no signature.

> There is a time for silence and a time for speech; a time for seeing and a time for covering the eyes. This is the time for silence and not seeing. Obey him who will attend you.

But the man in attendance had vanished. The only living creatures in sight outside the tent were crows on the top of the nearby wall and kites wheeling lazily overhead. There was almost perfect silence—no roofs —no smoke—nothing to suggest that there were human beings within ten miles.

"I will explore," said Dawa Tsering. "That old lama is a great one at writing letters that mean nothing. Maybe I shall find that fellow who brought the breakfast. If I beat him he may favor me with some news."

Ommony sat still and read the note again. The lama *might* be simply inducing him to waste time instead of starting in pursuit; but there were several other possibilities, not least that the lama's route might be leading somewhere where it would be dangerous for a foreigner to go disguised. There are individuals, in India as elsewhere, who would dare to ask Satan or even a Bhat-Brahman for his identification papers.

Another, not unreasonable theory was that the lama might be willing to be spied on at just such times as his actions were not mischievous, but would prefer to keep the spy at a distance when events of true importance were under way.

At any rate, the wording of the note might be held to imply a diplomatic threat that disobedience would terminate all communication. And on the other hand, he supposed the lama—a remarkably good judge of human nature—knew that he, Ommony, would not permit himself to be dropped into the discard quite so easily as that. If it was a trick, there would be more to it than merely leaving him behind; the best course was to sit still and await developments.

He awaited them for fifteen minutes, and then Dawa Tsering came, but not as a free agent. He was being led by the ear, although his huge "knife" was in his right hand and there seemed to be nothing to prevent plunging it into his custodian's stomach.

Diana growled a challenge and ran forward to sniff quarrelsomely at the legs of the

stranger, who ignored her as if she were not there; after a few sniffs she seemed to recognize him and returned to the tent, where she lay down close to Ommony and watched. She had ceased growling. The hair on her neck was no longer on end.

The stranger appeared to be a Sikh, but was possibly a Rajput. He was more than six feet tall, wore his black beard parted and brushed upward, looked extremely handsome in a gray silk turban whose end fell down over his shoulder, and was dressed in almost military looking khaki—jacket and trousers, with a gray silk cummerbund around his waist. He strode with consummate dignity that appeared to be natural, not assumed.

He let go Dawa Tsering's ear when he came within three strides of the tent, and took no further notice whatever of the Hillman, who stood a couple of paces away and thumbed the edge of his weapon, making grimaces that were nearly as inhuman as the grin on the devil mask he had worn on the stage. There was nothing to show there had been a struggle; both men's clothes were in order; neither man was breathing hard.

The stranger's dark-brown eyes looked steadily into the gloom within the tent and he presently saluted after a fashion of his own, quite unmilitary, something like the ancient Roman, raising his right hand, palm outward.

"Mr. Ommony?" he asked, in English.

"No!" roared Dawa Tsering from behind him. "Gupta Rao, thou ignorant idiot! A Bhat-Brahmin from Bikanir—a man who has a devil in him, who can teach thee manners!"

"Yes, I'm Ommony."

There was something in the voice and in the eyes that warned Ommony there was nothing to be gained by evasion. He stood up and returned the salute, also in his own way, adding to the gesture of his right hand an almost unnoticeable finger movement. The other man smiled.

"I am Sirdar Sirohe Singh, of Tilgaun."

Ommony laughed sharply, the way a deep-sea captain coughs sarcastic comment when a pilot has missed the tide. Here was the Secret Service after all. It was Sirdar Sirohe Singh who had sent the written report of the missing piece of jade to McGregor.

"Come in," he said abruptly, and made room on the bed for the Sirdar to sit down. He did not try to pretend to be glad to see him, but the Sirdar's next words altered the whole aspect of affairs.

"I do hope my letter to Number One did no harm," he began, stretching out long legs in front of him and speaking at the tent wall. His English was almost perfect, but guttural and a trifle aspirated. "I was in a difficult position. As a member of the Secret Service I was obliged to report. As the lama's friend I felt, naturally, other obligations. It was not until I learned that you were assigned to investigate that I ceased to worry."

"Who told you?" asked Ommony.

"Oh, I heard it. News travels, you know. No, I have not been in Delhi." (He had answered Ommony's thought; the question was unspoken.) "I arrived last night from the north. The lama asked me to submit myself to your disposal."

"Does this place belong to you?" asked Ommony, examining the calm, strong profile against the light. He had heard that the Sirdar was a wealthy landowner.

"No. The lama has the temporary use of it."

"It was very kind of you to—how did you express it?—submit yourself to my disposal. What I most need is information," said Ommony.

"Ah. That is elusive stuff."

"Not if you keep after it. Tell me what you know about the lama."

The Sirdar turned his head quickly and looked straight at him.

"Did you receive a note?" he asked. "It was tied to the dog's collar."

Ommony looked into the baffling dark eyes and could read nothing there except that the Sirdar knew much more than he proposed to tell. He was also conscious of dislike and knew that it was mutual.

"Just to what extent are you at my disposal?" he asked bluntly.

"I am to convey you to another place. Of course, that is at the proper time, and if you wish to go; not otherwise."

"Which place? Will the lama be there?"

"Probably."

"Tell me what you know of Samding."

"Did you read the note?" asked the Sirdar, again meeting Ommony's stare. "I have a message for you from Miss Sanburn at the Tilgaun mission. She entertained me the night I left Tilgaun. I

admitted to her it was possible I might meet you somewhere. She asked me to convey affectionate regards and to say that she would appreciate notice of exactly when she may expect you."

Ommnoy turned that over in his mind for half a minute. He could imagine no legitimate reason why Hannah Sanburn should ask for notice in advance. As a trustee it was his duty to pay surprize visits. Mrs. Cornock-Campbell's story of a girl named Elsa of whose very existence he had never previously heard, was a perfectly good reason for paying his next visit unannounced.

"When will you be seeing Miss Sanburn again?" he asked.

"Oh, quite soon."

"Will it be necessary to admit to her that you have seen me?"

"Just as you like."

"Please don't admit it then."

The Sirdar nodded; he seemed to regard the message as quite unimportant. Ommony followed the train of thought, however, and tried to catch him off guard with a question asked casually, as if he were merely making conversation.

"Have you seen Miss Sanburn's friend Elsa lately?"

But the Sirdar was not to be caught. It was impossible to tell whether or not he knew any girl of that name.

"Elsa?" he said.

"I see you don't know her," said Ommony, unconvinced but judging it would be useless to pursue the subject. He did not see how a man who lived on the outskirts of such a small place as Tilgaun could very well be ignorant of the existence of Hannah Sanburn's remarkable protégée, more especially since he was a trained and trusted member of the Secret Service, whose duty it would be to report any unusual circumstance. He did not doubt that the Sirdar had been retained on the Secret Service list as much to keep an eye on the mission as for any other reason.

"When are we to leave this place?" he asked.

"Tonight. The lama asked me to suggest to you the wisdom of not leaving the tent until I come for you—after the evening meal."

"Very well," said Ommony, standing up to cut short the interview. There was no sense in talking to a man who was determined to say nothing. "I'll be here when you come."

The Sirdar bowed with dignity and strode away. The moment he was out of earshot Ommony called Dawa Tsering into the tent.

"Is my trunk anywhere in sight?" he demanded.

"Nay, everything is gone. My yak-hair cloak is gone, and my good blankets. Those Tibetans——"

That was good news; it looked as if the lama really intended to await them somewhere. Ommony interrupted with another question—

"How did that Sirdar defeat you so easily?"

Dawa Tsering looked sulky.

"I will lay him belly-upwards one of these days!"

"How did you come to let him lead you by the ear then?"

"Huh! He lives at Tilgaun."

"What of it?"

"He is the friend of Miss-ish-anbun at the mission."

"What of that?"

"He is also the friend of the Raja of Tilgaun; and of the monks in the hills around Tilgaun; and of all the rascals who make Tilgaun a byword all the way from Lhassa to Darjiling. He has a servant with him, who would have seen, and would have told tales, if I had done more than draw my knife; and I tell you, Ommon*ee*, that dog of a Sirdar's influence reaches all the way to Spiti. I don't want too many enemies; I have enough of them in Spiti as it is."

"Why did you draw your knife?"

"Because I saw him, and he saw me, and I said to him, 'Thou! We are not in Tilgaun. Have a care; the kites in this part are just as hungry as those that live farther to the north!' And to that he said, 'Maybe. But the kites must say prayers to Garudi,* it is not I who must feed them.' And at that he took me by the ear and led me hither. He is altogether too despotic."

"I'm afraid you'll be a poor friend to rely on in a tight place," said Ommony, smiling.

"I? I am a terror in a tight place! That is just what I am good at. But I like first to be sure it *is* a tight place, and that the luck is reasonable. Lately I have had bad luck. But wait and see!"

He sat down to sharpen his knife with a small imported hone that he had stolen

* The God of the birds.

somewhere, humming to himself a song about the feuds of Spiti, where—

"A white mist rolls into a valley and sleeps,
O-ayee-O-ayee-O-ah!
There's a knife in the mist, and a young widow weeps,
O-ayee-O-ayee-O-ah!"

Ommony lay on the bed in the tent and forced himself to accept the situation calmly. There was no use in racking his brains; the mystery now had become still more involved by the fact that Sirdar Sirohe Singh was a member of the Secret Service, who considered himself obligated to report unusual incidents to McGregor and yet did not hesitate to lend a hand in obscuring the very trail he had been requested by McGregor to investigate; who instantly returned the secret identification signal, and yet refused to give information; who had been ordered by McGregor to remain in Tilgaun and observe events, and yet did not mind showing himself within two days' march of Delhi—(nearly a thousand miles from Tilgaun)—to a fellow member of the Secret Service, who he had no reason to suppose would not report him!

The best thing to do was to sleep, and Ommony tried to do so, waking by fits and starts to worry and wonder to what extent Hannah Sanburn had let herself be mixed up in the business. Above all, what could the business be?

He was sure now that Benjamin's story about the smuggling of white children northward was true, because the girls who were with the lama were certainly not natives of India, and could not possibly have learned all they knew in the way of language alone in less than a dozen years. They *must* have been brought from abroad. But why? For what purpose?

The mystery increased again when night fell. The same dumb, nondescript servant who had brought breakfast came with supper and hovered twenty yards away, signaling with a white cloth when Ommony had finished eating. Promptly in answer to the signal the Sirdar stepped out from the trees with a lantern and called for Gupta Rao in a loud voice, retreating as Ommony advanced toward him until, on the far side of the belt of trees Ommony was aware of shadowy forms of men—horses, at least a dozen of them in a long line, with gaps between—great shadowy carriages that filled the gaps as he drew nearer—and at last, smiling as placidly as if the new moon that shone like a sliver of pure gold over his shoulder were a halo he had just discarded, the lama himself.

SAMDING was in attendance, moving about among the horses, patting them; Ommony noticed him ease a bearing rein. The lama nodded to Ommony, stepped into the foremost carriage followed by Samding, and drove away at a gallop, the carriage swaying like a big gun going into action. Sirdar Sirohe Singh pushed Ommony into the next carriage—which had only four horses, whereas the lama's had six—allowed Diana just sufficient time to jump in behind him, and slammed the door, almost shutting it on the dog's tail. A whip cracked instantly and the carriage started rocking and bumping in the lama's wake. A moment later a third and a fourth carriage followed.

Within was almost total darkness. There were two windows made of slats, forming part of the doors; Ommony tried them both, but the slides were nailed in position. He opened a door and swung himself out on to the footboard to get a view of the following carriages, which he could just discern through the gloom and the cloud of dust, their drivers swaying on the high box-seats and shouting as they plied the whip.

There was no way of guessing whether Dawa Tsering had been left behind or not. He climbed back into the carriage, holding the door open, but could not see much except dust, darkness and occasional shadowy tree trunks.

The pace was furious. The flight was evidently prearranged, and managed perfectly. Horses were changed every ten miles or so, but whenever that happened men came to either side of Ommony's carriage and held the doors shut, riding on the footboards afterward until the place where the change was made was out of sight.

The route, except at intervals, did not lie along macadamized roads; once they lurched into a dry stream-bed and followed that for a mile or two, the wheels sinking in sand. But that, too, had been foreseen; men were waiting there, who ran alongside and seized the wheels whenever they sunk too deep, toiling as silently and smartly as a gun crew.

It was almost dawn when they rumbled

over the paved streets of a fair-sized town, but there was nothing to show what town it was. At last squared stones rang underfoot, a great gate slammed, and a Tibetan opened the carriage door. Ommony found himself in a courtyard in front of what looked like a temple door, only there seemed to be no temple at the back of it—nothing but a wall and a dense thicket of trees on ground that sloped uphill for more than a mile.

The Tibetan, taking him by the elbow, led him up steps through the entrance and down again into a cavern that was lighted with little imported kerosene lamps set in niches in the hewn rock walls. There was a maze of passages to right and left, and one wide tunnel that wound snakewise until it opened into a vault, part natural and part very ancient masonry, that would have held five thousand people.

The Tibetan led him across this great crypt, or whatever it was, and down a short passage at the far end into a smaller one in which Maitraya, his actors and a number of Tibetans were sleeping on mats on a wooden platform. Opposite the platform was a door, which the Tibetan unlocked, leading Ommony through a short tunnel into a shaft about fifty feet square at the base. Its sides sloped inward so as to be utterly unclimbable, and seventy or eighty feet overhead was a patch of sky not more than twenty feet across.

In the midst, exactly under the square patch of daylight was a tank, brimful of clean water that appeared to flow in from beneath and flowed over into a trough that disappeared somewhere in the rock wall. On every side of the enclosure there were square openings half concealed by curtains made by matting. Ommony was led through one of those into a cave about twenty feet long, very plainly but quite comfortably furnished, and there the Tibetan left him without a word.

There was no restraint placed on him; no request that he should stay inside the cave; so he went and sat down in the opening, watching the dawn gradually fill the place with light until the clouds shone clearly reflected in the shallow tank.

After a while the lama entered, followed by Samding and several Tibetans, or men who looked like Tibetans; they crossed to the far side and disappeared through one of the curtained openings. Not long after that great quantities of food—enough for twenty or thirty people—were brought in earthenware bowls; enough for two men was set down beside Ommony and the remainder was carried through the opening through which the lama had disappeared.

Ommony was left entirely to himself. After a while he sent Diana to explore, but though she disappeared through the lama's entrance and stayed within for more than half an hour, nothing came of it; she returned and lay down beside him with her head on her paws, as if she had no information to convey.

So Ommony proceeded to explore on his own account, commencing by merely walking around the tank. Nothing happened, so he peered into one opening that had no mat in front of it, walked in and found a cave almost exactly like his own, leading nowhere. He stayed in there a minute or two examing a very ancient carving on the wall, that bore no resemblance to any monument he had ever seen and yet was vaguely familiar; he could not guess its significance; it was extremely simple, almost formless, and yet suggestive of an infinite variety of forms; he tried to memorize it; for future reference, and then remembered that the glyph, with which the letter to McGregor in a woman's handwriting had been signed, was almost, if not quite the same shape.

He was on his way out when Samding met him in the entrance, his brown turban and cloak outlined in gold by the daylight at his back. More than ever the *chela* seemed like someone from another world, and as usual he spoke without preliminary, in a voice no man could quarrel with:

"Tsiang Samdup desires you should not ask questions—" the words were English, beautifully spoken—"If anything is lacking for your comfort, you are to command *me*."

Ommony laughed.

"All right, I command you. Explain what all this means!"

Samding's face became lit with sudden laughter—not irritating—friendly, wise, humorous.

"Tsiang Samdup says, 'Knowledge comes from within, not from without,'" he answered. "As a man thinks, so are his surroundings. Tsiang Samdup says, 'The eyes of curiosity see only what is not so, and it is not only a man's lips that ask

questions; the eyes and the taste and the touch are all inquisitive, seeking to learn from without what shall deny the truth within. He who would see the dawn must wait for it; and even so, if he is blind, it will be darkness to him.' "

"Where did you learn English?" Ommony demanded.

"From within," said the *chela*. "All knowledge comes from within."

Ommony laughed back at him.

"All right. Tell me from within where Dawa Tsering is."

"He shall tell you himself," said the *chela*.

He stepped back, and pointed to Ommony's cave. There sat Dawa Tsering in the doorway, scratching his back against the rock. The *chela* walked away, stroking Diana's head, who followed him as far as the entrance to the lama's cave.

"Where have *you* been?" asked Ommony, going over and standing in front of the Hillman.

"Nowhere. I rode in the carriage behind you, with a lot of Tibetans. They are fools, and I won their money playing dice. Thinking to follow the luck, when I reached this place I discovered where those girls are—all in a big cave together—may it fall in and destroy them! They were too many and they made a mock of me. But wait until I get them one at a time! I am not one to be mocked by women, Gupta Rao!"

CHAPTER XX

OMMONY CAPITULATES

This much I know: That it is easy to cause offense and easy to give pleasure, but difficult to ignore all considerations except justice, and much more difficult to judge rightly whoever, ignoring both offense and pleasure, leaves the outcome of his actions to the Higher Law. Therefore, judge yourself alone, for that is difficult enough, and, depend on it, the Higher Law will judge you also.—From the Maxims of Tsiang Samdup.

DAWA TSERING would say no more about his adventure among the women, but it was plain enough that he had been made ridiculous. He was fortunate not to have been caught and manhandled; and he realized it.

"If it had not been for some Tibetans—" he grumbled, and then lapsed into moody silence, sharpening his "knife" on the edge of the entrance to Ommony's cave.

They were left entirely alone, watching birds that moved like specks on the infinite blue through the opening overhead, until night fell and the gloom within the shaft grew solid. Sound died with the light, and one lantern that a man set over the entrance to the lama's cave made hardly any difference.

They brought food again, with the usual bones for the dog, and a candle to stick on the floor of the cave; but nothing else happened until the lama's sonorous voice called through the darkness and Ommony followed him down the tunnel into the vast cavern he had crossed that morning. It was already thronged with people seated on mats or on the bare floor, who filled the place with whispers; a shuffling of feet like the sound of wind and running water came from the entrance, where hundreds more were coming down the long tunnel.

Such light as there was, came from little smoky lamps set on ledges in the rock walls. A bell rang when the lama appeared and the orchestra, almost invisible in shadow, burst into tune such as Stravinsky never dreamed of, filling the cavern with din that made the hair rise—restless, yearning noise, accentuated by the hoarse *radongs*.

Across one end of the cavern a strong stage had been erected and a very rough curtain. The lama led the way behind it, where the stage was already set and the make-up man was busy with the last of the actors. Tibetans pounced on Ommony and dressed him for his part by candlelight, but in the improvised wings, where the girls waited whispering and laughing, there were batteries of acetylene lights, all ready to be turned on, in charge of a man who looked like a Parsee.

Where the footlights should have been there were mirrors arranged to throw the light back in the actors' faces. Everything was make-shift; yet everything appeared to have been done by men who knew precisely what was wanted and who had worked without confusion to provide it.

Just before the play began the lama went before the curtain and the music ceased. There was no light where he stood; to the audience he must have resembled a shadow dimly outlined on the dark cloth.

He told a story interspersed with proverbs and the only sound from the enormous audience was in the pauses, when they caught their breath. The moment his make-up was complete Ommony stood at

the edge of the curtain, where he could hear and look out at the thousands of eyes, on which the faint light from the lamps shone like starlight on still water.

"—So they spoke to the god who had come among them. And the god said, 'Ye have a government; what more do ye want?' Whereto they answered, 'But the government is bad, nor is it of our choosing.' And the god said, 'Is the weather of your choosing?' And they said, 'Nay.'

"Whereat the god laughed pleasantly, for he was one who knew the cause and the effect of things.

" 'As for the weather,' he said, 'ye make the most of that. When it is hot ye wear lighter garments; and when it is cold ye light fires. When it rains ye stay indoors, and when it is dry ye sally forth. If a man complains about the weather, ye say he is a malcontent who should know that all sorts of weather are of benefit to some folk, and that all communities in turn receive their share of heat and cold and drought and moisture. Is that not so?'

"And they answered, 'Yea.'

"So the god asked them another question. 'If ye so adapt yourselves to what ye say is not of your contriving, how is it that ye say the government can not be borne? Can ye say that the rain and the snow and the heat are good, but the government is not good?'

"And the god laughed loud at them.

" 'Ye may change the government by violence, as ye can *not* change the weather,' he said to them, 'but the reason *why* ye may not change the weather is, that ye would make too much mischief, what with this man's convenience and that man's needs. And the same is the reason why ye *should* accept this government and not destroy it in favor of another; because out of mischief and destruction no improvement comes.

" 'Like comes from like. Improvement is the product of improvement, not of violence. Ye have the government ye earn, exactly as the earth receives the weather it deserves. For the weather, which comes and goes, came and went before your time. Indeed, and also there were governments before your time. The weather has altered the hills and the plains. The governments altered your fathers and will alter you, and your sons after you.' Thus said the god.

"And they answered, 'Aye. But what if we alter the government?'

And the god said:

" 'Ye can change the name by which ye call it, and ye can slay those in authority, putting worse fools in their place, but change its nature ye can not, ye being men, who are only midway between one life and another. But as the hills are changed, some giving birth to forests, some being worn down by the wind and rain, the weather becomes modified accordingly.

" 'And it is even so with you. As ye, each seeking in his own heart for more understanding, purge and modify yourselves, your government will change as surely as the sun shall rise tomorrow morning—for the better, if ye deserve it—for the worse if ye give way to passion and abuse of one another.

" 'For a government,' said the god, 'is nothing but a mirror of your minds, tyrannical for tyrants, hypocritical for hypocrites, corrupt for those who are indifferent, extravagant and wasteful for the selfish, strong and honorable only toward honest men.'

"And having spoken to them thus, the god departed, some remembering his words and some forgetting them. To those who remembered, life thereafter was not so difficult, because of hope that brought tolerance so that they minded each his own business, which is enough for any man to do. But to those who forgot, there was trouble and confusion, which each created for himself, but for which each blamed the government, which therefore persecuted him. Because a government is only the reflection of men's minds.

"May peace, which is the fruit of wisdom, perfect you in all your ways."

The *radongs* roared, drowning the last echo of the sonorous benediction. The orchestra crashed into the overture. The lama stepped behind the curtain with a glance to right and left to make sure everyone was in his place, sat down behind the well and signaled for the play to begin.

As before, Dawa Tsering danced on first but in no other respect was the play quite the same as on the previous night. The lama's signals, made at unexpected moments, changed things as if he were making music with the actors for his instrument. *Sotto voce* he prompted, and no one on the stage dared to slacken his attention for a

moment for fear of missing a changed cue.

He seemed to know how to adapt and modify the play to fit the different environment and, in keeping with the solemn gloom of the huge cavern, he subtly stressed the mystery. The acetylene lights threw a weird, cameo-like paleness over everything; the lama made the most of that, instead of struggling to overcome it.

Toward the end of the last act the audience was spell-bound, for the moment too interested to applaud; and the lama took advantage of that, too. He hurried in front of the curtain and stood with both hands raised, the messenger of climax.

"Peace!" he boomed. "Peace is born within the womb of silence! Go in silence. Break not the thread of peace! Ye have conceived it! Bring it forth!"

The orchestra played softly, blending sounds as gentle as falling rain with the burble of streams and the distant boom of waterfalls. There were bird notes, and the sighing of wind through trees—half melancholy, yet majestic rhythm with an undernote of triumph brought out by the muffled drums.

"And if they would not talk for a day or two, they might perhaps remember!" said the lama, pausing as he walked past Ommony, who was being stripped of his *sadhu's* costume. "There is virtue in silence."

"Listen, O captain of conundrums!" said Ommnoy, trying to speak with emphasized respect but failing, because a Tibetan was rubbing his face with a towel to remove grease paint. "You still puzzle me, and I shall keep on spying as long as you let me; but I'm your friend, and for all I'm worth. I'd like you to understand that."

It was the most emotional speech he had made in twenty years, but emotion gripped him; he could not help himself.

The lama smiled, his wrinkles multiplying the shrewd kindness of the bright old eyes.

"For all you are worth? If you knew, my son, how *much* that is, you might be less extravagant. Jump not from one emotion to another lest you lose self mastery," he answered, and passed on, beckoning to Samding.

THERE was the same swift, exactly detailed rush to pack up and depart; the same apparent flight for no apparent motive—this time in covered bullock carts that creaked through dimly lighted streets, until they came to a pitched camp on the outskirts of town, where camels and horses waited. Cloaked beyond recognition, everybody except the lama rode horseback, he sitting on a camel at the head of the procession, looking like an old enormous vampire, his head drooped forward on his breast.

The girls rode surrounded by hooded men, who let no other men except Samding come near them. Ommony tried to draw abreast to see whether they sat their horses skillfully or not, but two Tibetans rode him off and, saying nothing, held his rein until the girls had a lead of a hundred yards. After that they kept two horses' lengths ahead of him, and even drove Diana back when Ommony sent her forward just to see what would happen.

There was only a thin new moon, and the road ran for most of the distance between huge *peepul* trees that rendered the whole caravan invisible. Two hours after midnight they reached a village, where a change was made back to bullock carts, which conveyed them to a town that they entered shortly after daylight and now, for the first time, no precautions were taken to prevent Ommony from learning where he was. The lama had taken him at his word.

Ommony laughed as he recognized the inevitable effect of that. He would almost have preferred continued mistrust. He knew his own nature sufficiently to be aware that he must now regard himself as the lama's guest. Intensely curious still, immensely interested, as much puzzled as ever, but satisfied that the lama was, as he expressed it to himself, "a *pukka* sportsman," he made up his mind to learn nothing that he might be called on to explain—for instance to McGregor—later on.

"I hate this business of condemning a man on mere suspicion," he thought. "The old boy's entitled to the benefit of doubt. From me, from now, he gets it. I'm ashamed of having doubted him. ——! I hate feeling ashamed!"

Obstinacy has its good side. Having made up his mind that the lama was entitled to respect, Ommony could no more have helped respecting and protecting him than he would have dreamed of not protecting, for instance, Benjamin in the old days when Benjamin was a fugitive from rank injustice.

He began deliberately to shut his eyes to

information. The advice of the Chinese prince-poet, not to watch your neighbor too closely when he is in your melon patch, about defined his attitude. And it is surprizing how much a man can avoid seeing, if he is determined not to expose another's secrets.

He laughed at himself. He could not resist the impulse to continue in the lama's company, although it was likely enough that sooner or later his presence in disguise might endanger the lives of the entire troupe. He was perfectly aware that he had received no definite proof of the lama's honesty, pretty nearly sure that his own change of attitude was due to the same psychology that had won the applause of the crowd, and finally excused himself—with a laugh at his own speciousness—on the ground that he and Dawa Tsering and the dog were indispensable.

But when he had been shown into a small room at the rear of a temple enclosure, that seemed to have been deserted by its Hindu owners and, by some mysterious means, reserved for the lama's use, the lama came to him, accompanied as usual by Samding, and, after looking at him for a moment, seemed to read his mind, and promptly blew Ommony's conclusions to pieces.

"My son, I do not need you, or the dog or Dawa Tsering. All three are good, but I am not the molder of your destiny. Is there another way you would prefer to take?"

"I'd rather go with you," said Ommony, "but I give you clearly to understand I'm spying on you."

The lama looked amused. His wrinkles moved as if he had tucked away a smile in their recesses.

"My son, to spy is one thing; to absorb enlightenment is something else. A man might spy for all eternity and learn nothing but confusion. For what purpose did you spy on me in the beginning?"

Ommony jumped into that opening. Frankness at last!

"I think you know without my telling. I began with the sole intention of finding my way into the Abor Valley to look for traces of my sister and her husband, who vanished in that direction twenty years ago. The piece of jade fell into my hands, and you know how that led to my meeting you. Then I heard a story about little European girls smuggled into the Abor Valley. I have seen these girls that you have in your company. Explain them. Clear up the mystery."

The lama seemed to hesitate.

"I could talk to you about the stars," he said presently. "Yet if you should meditate about them, and observe, you would learn more than I could tell you. My son, have you meditated on the subject of your sister?"

"On and off for twenty years," said Ommony.

"And you now pursue the course your meditation has discovered? It appears to me that is the proper thing to do."

"You mean, if I follow you I'll find out?"

"I am no fortune teller. Electricity, my son, was in the world from the beginning. How many million men observed its effects before *one* discovered it? Gold was in the world from the beginning. How many men pass where it lies hidden, until *one* digs and finds it? Wisdom was in the universe from the beginning, but only those whose minds are open to it can deduce the truth from what they see."

"Do you *know* what became of her?" Ommony asked abruptly.

The tone of his voice was belligerent, but the lama ignored that. He answered with a sort of masked look on his face as if he himself were still pondering the outcome:

"If I were to tell you *all I know*, you would inevitably draw a wrong conclusion. There are pitfalls on the way to knowledge. Suspicion and pride are the worst; but a desire to learn too quickly is a grave impediment."

During about three breaths he seemed to be considering whether to say more or not; but he leaned an arm on Samding's shoulder and walked out of the room without speaking again.

CHAPTER XXI

THE LAY OF ALHA

Sooner or later we must learn all knowledge. It is therefore necessary to begin. And for a beginning much may be learned from this: That men in pain and men in anger are diverted from either sensation by a song—and very readily.—From the Book of the Sayings of Tsiang Samdup.

THEREAFTER life for two months was a dream of many colors through which the lama led without explaining any of it. At times Ommony abandoned hope of learning what the lama's purpose was; at

other times he dimly discerned it, or thought he did, midway between the rocks of politics and the shoals of some new creed. And whether he guessed at the truth, or believed he never would know it, he reveled in the swiftly moving, nigh incredible procession of events.

No day was like another. No two receptions were alike in any town they came to. They put on the play in ramshackle sheds at country fairs with the din of sideshows all around them, in pretentious theaters built of corrugated iron, in temple courtyards, in more than one palace garden; once in an empty railway godown* from which a greatly daring Eurasian clerk had removed stored merchandise; in a crypt under a pagoda—and there was a riot that time, because some Brahmans said the place had been rendered unclean by the actors, and Ommony came within a hair's breadth of exposure—in the open, under trees, where roads led to seven villages and a crowd of at least three thousand gathered silent in the bonfire light that shone between enormous trees. Once they played in an empty tank, from whose bottom an acre of sticky mud, two inches thick, had to be cleaned out before the crowd could squat there; once in a cave so stuffy that Maitraya's women fainted.

They traveled by elephant, camel, horse, mule, cart, in litters, for fifty miles by train, and once, for a day and a night, in barges along an irrigation ditch, concealed under hurdles on which vegetables were heaped to look like full boat-loads. They went alternately like hunted animals and like a circus trying to attract attention.

There were places where the lama seemed to go in fear of the police; other places where he ignored them as if nonexistent. He always seemed to know in advance what to expect, and whether it was wise to move by daylight. Most of the traveling was done by night, but there were some places where crowds gave them an ovation as they passed through streets at noon.

Once, when a man who looked like a raja's son arrived breathless on a foaming horse and talked with the lama under a wayside *baobab*, the party separated into four detachments, and Ommony lay hidden for a whole day under the blistering iron roof of an abandoned shed. There was never any explanation given. None of the apparently chance-met providers of food and transporation asked questions or gave Ommony any information.

Sometimes the lama himself did not seem to know the right direction. On those occasions he would call a halt by the roadside and wait there until some mysterious individual arrived. Sooner or later some one always came. Once they waited for a whole day within sight of a fenced village. But they never lacked for food, or for the best the country could provide in the way of accommodation.

In one large town of the Central Provinces, in which two thousand people packed an assembly hall, there were police officers on chairs near the stage, who made notes ostentatiously. The lama's speech before the curtain on that occasion was rather longer than usual and Ommony, watching the policemen, recognized the insanity that impels men to interfere with what they can not understand.

That night he slipped off the stage before San-fun-ho's last speech was finished, hurried into his Bhat-Brahman clothes, and was standing close to the police officers when the crowd began to leave the theater. There was one man with whom he had dined in the club at Delhi, another who was notorious for drastic enforcement of the "Seditious Practices" Act, and a third whom he did not know. They were all three very hot under the collar. Said one:

"A —— nasty seditious play—obviously propaganda to prevent enlistment. They've chosen this place because recruiting's going on here for the army. It's anarchistic."

"Oh, decidedly. Part of Ghandi's noncooperation tactics."

"Financed in America, I'll bet you. That's where all the propaganda money comes from."

"Anyhow, we've a clear case. Seditious utterances—uncensored play—no permit. Step lively and bring the squad, Williams; we'll lock 'em all up for the night and find out who they are."

But an obstinate Bhat-Brahman stood in Mr. Williams' way and spoke in English, curtly:

"No, you don't! I'm detailed to this by McGregor! I won't have police interference! Keep your constables out of sight!"

"Who are *you*?" asked the senior officer, pushing himself forward.

*Warehouse.

"Never mind."

"Show me your credentials."

"At *your* risk! Come to the telegraph office if you like and watch me get you transferred to the salt mines! You'll enjoy a patrol up there—you'll get one newspaper a month!"

"At least tell me your name."

"My number is 903," said Ommony.

His number on the secret service roster was not 903; but one does not squander truth too lavishly on men who will surely repeat it. He was not anxious that McGregor should have an inkling of his whereabouts. The mere mention of a number was enough; the policemen walked out abusive of the Secret Service, conscious that the "Bhat-Brahman" was grinning mischievously at their backs.

The lama saw but said nothing. That night he directed the departure more leisurely than usual, as if satisfied that Ommony had made him safe from the police; but from that time on he kept himself more than ever aloof, and during two whole months of wandering Ommony did not succeed in having two hundred words with him.

HOWEVER, the lama and his *chela* reciprocated in due time. They reached a town in the Central Provinces where not even certified and pedigreed Bhats would have been welcome, and an uncertified one who traveled in doubtful company was in danger of his life. A committee of "twice-born" demanded his presence for investigation in a temple crypt, and Ommony's retort discourteous, to the effect that he recognized no superiors, aroused such anger that the self-appointed judges of sanctity resorted to the oldest tactics in the world.

Those who hate Brahmans the most are most amenable to skilful irritation by them and most careful to insist after the event that Brahmans had nothing to do with it; so it is just where the Brahmans are most detested that they are most difficult to bring to book. And a mob can gather in India more swiftly than a typhoon at sea.

It was a hot, flat, treeless city, as unlovely as the commercialism that had swept over it these latter years was cruel. The streets ran more nearly at right angles than is the rule in India, and the temples faced the streets with an air of having been built by one and the same contractor, and a cheap one. The quarters the lama's party occupied consisted of a hideously ugly modern theater that backed on a cellular stack of ill-built living-rooms, the whole surrounded by four streets, three of which were as narrow as village lanes.

That night the packed audience was restless, and whenever the *saddhu* spoke his lines there were noisy interruptions, cat-calls, jeers. Some one threw a rotten orange that missed Ommony but threw Diana into a frenzy, and for minutes at a time it looked as if the curtain would have to be rung down before the close; but the lama's quiet voice from behind the well and from under the throne kept up a steady flow of reassurance inaudible beyond the footlights:

"Patience! Forbearance! There is strength in calmness. Proceed! Proceed! You are a king, Maitraya; you are not affected by ungentleness! Proceed!"

But even San-fun-ho's long speech was received with irritation; some one in authority had told the crowd it was a trick to destroy their sacred religion. The *chela's* voice rang through the theater and overcame the murmurings, but the hymn to Arjuna that followed was drowned in a babeling tumult, as half of the audience poured in panic out of one door while a mob stormed another, breaking it down and surging in with a roar that shook the theater.

The stage hands stripped the actors faster than usual and herded them out through the back door to the living-rooms. They tried to make Ommony go, too, but he fought them off when they seized him by the arms; he had hard work to keep Diana from using her teeth to protect him while he hurried into his Bhat-Brahman clothes, wondering what solution the lama would discover for this predicament.

"I'll bet the old sportsman won't surrender me to the mob!" he muttered. "If I live through this, I'll know exactly what to think of him. If he's—" But there was no word for what he might be.

The crowd was yelling "The Bhat! The Bhat! The spy! The impostor! Bring out the unclean ape who poses as a twice-born!" Two scared looking "constabeels" who had appeared from somewhere, standing at either corner of the stage with their backs to the curtain, were valiantly

preventing the mob from swarming behind the scenes. The lama seemed to have disappeared, and Ommony felt a sudden, sickening conviction that the old man and his *chela* were only fair-weather intriguers after all.

But suddenly the mob grew quiet—seemed to hold its breath. The lama's voice, not very loud, but unmistakable and pitched like a mountaineer's to carry against wind and through all other sounds, was holding their attention from behind the footlights.

Then Samding passed across the stage and slipped in front of the curtain; he had changed into that ivory-white costume in which he had received Prabhu Singh, and was smiling as if the prospect of a battle royal pleased him. Ommony went to the edge of the curtain to watch, holding Diana's collar, ready to loose her in defense of the lama in case of need.

"Bring out the Bhat!" yelled some one. There was a chorus of supporting shouts, but that was the last of the noise. The mob grew still again, spellbound by curiosity.

Samding took the center of the stage and the lama squatted down beside him, eyes half closed, apparently in meditation. The *chela* spoke, and his voice held a note of appeal that aimed straight at the heart of simplicity.

"O people, if ye have been wronged, it is we ourselves who first should put the matter right. Ye, being pious, unoffending people, will accord us that privilege. We ask no trial. That is unnecessary. Which among you are the individuals who have suffered at our hands? Unwittingly, it may be we have done you harm. You will agree it is the injured ones to whom redress is due. Let the injured stand forth. Let him, who of his own body or possessions has suffered harm at our hands, step forth and name his own terms of settlement."

He dared to pause for thirty seconds, while the mob glared, each expecting some one else to hurl an accusation. But the original instigators of violence are careful to keep out of reach when the trouble begins, and there was no spokesman ready with a definite accusation—nothing but a disgusting smell of sweat, a sea of eyes, and a hissing of indrawn breath. The lama whispered, not moving his head, and the *chela* continued:

"It is possible the injured are not here. Let some one bring the men for whose injury we are in any way responsible!"

There was another pause, during which the lama got up and walked meditatively toward the edge of the curtain, where he came face to face with Ommony.

"My son, can you act the Bhat as well as you can the *saddhu?*" he enquired. "Otherwise, escape while there is opportunity! Be wise. There is no wisdom in attempting what you can not do."

"Yes, I can act the Bhat," said Ommony. His jaws were set. He had been a last-ditched fighter all his life. Of all things in the world, he most loved standing by his friends with all resources and every faculty in an extremity.

The lama returned to the *chela's* side, whispered and squatted down. The *chela* went on speaking:

"It may be ye have been misguided. There are always unwise men who seek to stir up indignation for their own obscure advantage. Are there any Brahmans in your midst?"

There was only one possible answer to that question. No "twice-born" would risk personal defilement by mingling with such a mob of "untouchables." A laugh with a suggestion of a sneer in it rippled across the sea of upturned faces.

"It would seem then that the Brahmans have sent you to pass judgment on a Bhat, who is one of their own fraternity," said the *chela* calmly. "It appears they trust you to conduct investigation for them. That is a very high compliment from Brahmans, isn't it? If *they* are willing to accept your judgment on such an important point, who are we that we should not abide by it? The Bhat shall give you his own account of himself. Henceforth ye may say to the Brahmans that they are no longer the sole judges of their own cause."

There was a laugh—a laugh of sheer delight that grew into a good-tempered roar. There was doubtless not a member of the mob who had not suffered scores of times from the blight of Brahman insolence. The Brahman's claim to be a caste apart and an unindictable offense forever, soothes their own self-righteousness but does not exactly make them popular.

"I pray you to be seated," said the *chela;* and after a few moments' hesitation the mob sat down on the floor, first in dozens, then in droves.

There was no more danger, provided Ommony could play his own part; but if he should make one mistake the situation would be worse than ever. He beckoned one of the musicians, who was guarding the door at the rear of the stage, signed to him to bring his instrument, stepped out in front of the curtain and sat down beside the lama.

Hostile silence broke into a sea of grins and chuckles when Diana, still in her grease-paint, followed and squatted on his left hand between him and the musician. The musician was deathly scared, but unfroze and tuned his instrument when the lama looked at him. Ommony surveyed the crowd with the best imitation of insolence his strained nerves could muster, taking his time, absorbing the feel of the lama's calmness. He needed it; he sensed that the old man's courage was a dozen times as great as his.

"And now, my son," the lama whispered, "we are face to face with opportunity."

That was a brave man's view of danger! Ommony laughed, cleared his throat and thrust his lips out impudently—

"People who don't know enough to ask a blessing, may expect to get—what?" he demanded tartly.

"*Pranam*," said two or three voices, and the murmur caught on. It was not unanimous, but it sufficed to put him in countenance. He blessed them with an air of doing it because he had to, not for any other reason.

"Now," he said in the nasal impromptu doggerel singsong of the minstrel, "I could sing for you a ballard of your own abominable shortcomings, and it would serve you right; but it would not make your souls white, and it would take all night. It would give me much delight, but it would put you all to flight, and I'm compassionate.

"Or I could sing you a few measures about the Brahmans of this place; who are a lousy lot, but if I sang of their disgrace, not a one would show his face again among you. You need the Brahmans to keep you from thinking too much of yourselves! They're bad, but you're worse, you're the sinners and they're the curse. Take that thought home and think about it!

"Is there anybody here," he asked, with his head to one side, "who would like me to sing about him personally? No? You're not anxious? Don't be backward. Don't think it's too difficult. Stand up and tell me your name, and I'll tell you all about you and your father and your uncles and your son, and what mischief you were up to this day fortnight. Nobody curious? Oh, very well. Then I'll sing you the Lay of Alha."

INDIA will listen to that song hours without end. It is a saga of Rajput chivalry, and men who know no chivalry nor ever were in Rajputana love to hear it better than the chink of money or the bray of the all-conquering gramophone.

Since the white man first imposed himself on India there have not been half a dozen who have learned that lay by heart from end to end, not three who could have sung it, none but Ommony who could have skipped long, tedious parts so artfully and have introduced in place of them extempore allusions to modern politics and local news. He outdid any Bhat they had ever heard, because he did not dare to count, as Bhats do, on the song's traditional popularity and so to slur through it anyhow. He had to win the audience. But what obsessed him most was a desire to win the lama's praise; the harder he tried, the more he admired the lama, sitting as calm as a Buddha beside him.

Regarded as music his effort was not marvelous. As a feat of wit and memory it was next thing to a miracle. His voice, not more than fair to middling good and partially trained, survived to the end because he pitched it through his nose, relieving the strain on his throat; and his manner grew more and more confident as he realized that memory was not playing tricks and he could recall every line of the long epic.

He sang them into a merry frame of mind; he sang them thrilled, compassionate, intrigued, excited, sentimental, bellicose and proud in turn. He had them bumming the refrain with him. He had them swaying in time to the tune as they sat, their laughing, upturned faces glistening with sweat. He had them throwing money to him before the lay was half sung; and it was then that the lama whispered:

"Enough, my son. Forget not to put skill in the conclusion."

Ommony stopped singing, and gagged at the crowd, with his tongue between his teeth, pretending that his voice had given out.

"Did any Brahman in this city ever do

as much for you?" he croaked, and they roared applause.

"I am a Bhat, and I can bless or I can curse more efficaciously than any thousand Brahmans in the Province! Watch!"

He turned to Diana and made her sit up on her haunches.

"What do *you* think of the Brahmans of this city?" he demanded, and Diana growled like an earthquake.

"What do you think of these people in front of you?"

She barked and got down on all four feet to wag her tail at them.

"There! There you are! Even a dog knows you are well-meaning folk who have been fooled by rascally Brahmans, who mouth *mantras* and do unclean things when none is looking! Get out of here, all of you, before I curse you! Go while I am in a good temper—before I put a blight on you! Hurry!"

They yelled for more song, but it was after midnight and the lama had other plans. He hustled Ommony off the stage, himself remaining at the corner of the curtain for a minute to make sure of the departing crowd's mood. Ommony heard the chink of money as he rewarded the two "constabeels." Then, as placid as Ommony had ever seen him, but a little stooped and tired, he led the way to the stage door, saying over his shoulder to Samding:

"Did you study that lesson? Have you learned it?"

Ommony did not catch the *chela's* answer. He felt the floor jerk underfoot and stepped off a trap-door. It moved, and a hand came through, then the outline of a face that appeared to be listening. He bent down to lift the heavy trap and Dawa Tsering climbed out on hands and knees, sweating profusely and rubbing dust out of his eyes.

"*Yow!* There are rats in that place, Gupta Rao—big ones, and it is dark! Go down and look if you don't believe me."

"What were *you* doing down there?" Ommony enquired.

"I? Down there? Oh, I was looking to see if there was a passage by which that mob could reach you from the rear. Yes, I was! Don't laugh at me, or I will call you by your right name! Why didn't you turn me loose with my knife to drive the mob forth, instead of singing to them like a nurse to a lot of children? I could have cleaned the place of that rabble in two minutes. You should have left it to me!"

"Did you kill any rats?" asked Samding, grinning mischievously. He was holding the door open, waiting for them.

"Thou! I will kill thee, at any rate!"

The Hillman rushed at the *chela*, but Ommony tripped him. Samding slipped through the door and let it slam.

"There, did you see that?" Dawa Tsering grumbled, picking himself up. "That *chela* uses the black arts. He threw me to the floor with one wink of his eye. Did you see? He is no good! He is a bad one! Now I am never tempered to slay the lama, which is why I endure his objectionable righteousness; but that *chela*—I never see him but I want to squeeze his throat with my two thumbs, thus, until his eyes pop out!"

CHAPTER XXII

DARJILING

The secret of the charm of the lotus is that none can say wherein its beauty lies; for some say this, and some say that, but all agree that it is beautiful.

And so, indeed, it is with woman. Her influence is mystery; her power in concealment.

For that which men have uncovered and explained, whether rightly or wrongly, they despise. But that which they discern, although its underlying essence is concealed from them, they wonder at and worship.—From the Book of the Sayings of Tsiang Samdup.

THE standing miracle was the lama's skill in having his own way and in keeping his own secrets without any discoverable method. His way seemed more alertly excellent, his secrets more obscure, from day to day. For instance—those mysterious young women. Not for one minute during two months and eleven days did Ommony or Dawa Tsering find an opportunity to speak with them alone, not though Diana grew dangerously fat on sticky sweetmeats that they gave her; for she interpreted orders to go and make friends with them into permission to accept food.

The only key that seemed to fit the mystery was that the girls had been too well trained to be tricked into indiscretion. Tyranny could never have accomplished it. Once, Ommony picked up an amethyst earring, dropped in a corridor; he wrapped it in paper, on which he scribbled a humorous verse, tucked it into Diana's collar, and sent her nosing around the girls' quarters.

The dog returned after an hour or so with

a caricature of Ommony drawn on the paper in charcoal, extremely clever but not flattering. On another occasion he sent Diana with a note asking for the words of the song that the girls chanted on the stage; he saw the lama read that note on the stage the same night and, after a quiet glance at him, deliberately tear it up. The following morning he received the words of the song in the lama's heavy handwriting. He was acutely aware that the girls discussed him with a great deal of amusement, but he could never get them to exchange glances or to make any response to his overtures.

Dawa Tsering made a dozen attempts to invade the women's quarters. Several times he was caught by the Tibetans and disposed of cavalierly — usually simply chucked into the nearest heap of garbage. Three times he managed to get into a room in which the girls were, but he would never tell afterwards what had happened to him; once he emerged so angry that Ommony really believed for an hour or two that he might murder some one, and took his knife away, but returned it at the lama's instigation.

"It is not always wise to prohibit," said the lama. "His imagination needs an outlet. Give him his toy."

It was a baffling conundrum why the lama should go to such pains to present his play in more than sixty towns and villages, and always escape immediately afterward. It was not always the police; he treated the occasional difficulties they presented pretty much as a circus director regards bad weather. He appeared to be much more afraid of the results of his own success, and to run away from that as from a conflagration. Offers of money, arguments, prayers, nothing could persuade him to repeat a performance anywhere. The greater a crowd's importunity, the swifter his flight.

By the time they reached Darjiling Ommony was convinced of two things: That the "Middle Way" is undiscoverable to outsiders, being opened, closed and changed in detail by unknown individuals, who are obeyed implicitly, and who do their own selecting; and that the lama was himself in receipt of orders from a secret hierarchy.

The roar of *radongs* came down the chilly wind, announcing they were seen. A procession of brown-robed monks filed out to meet them, each monk spinning a prayer-wheel and grinning as he mumbled the everlasting *"Om Mani Padme Hum"** that by repetition bars the doors of the various worlds of delusion and permits pure meditation.

It seemed to give no offense that Tsing Samdup and his *chela* had no prayer-wheels. Maitraya and his actors were as welcome as the rest. Ommony was greeted with child-like grins from oily, slant-eyed Mongolian faces that betrayed no suggestion of suspicion. The dog was chuckled at. Maitraya's caresses were greeted no more and no less cordially than the rest.

Tsiang Samdup seemed to be regarded as almost an equal by the gray-bearded abbot who waited to receive him in the wide, arched gateway; there was no perceptible interval between their salutations; it would have been hard to swear which had greeted the other first, although it was the abbot who bestowed the blessing.

The *chela's* reception was peculiar. The abbot blessed him solemnly, then stared at him for a long time. From the others there was an air of deference; a peculiar form of treating him as a mere *chela*, with an attitude of deep respect underlying it and not nearly concealed. They exchanged glances and nodded, formed a group around him, regarding him with curiosity, and with something akin to awe.

Once within the monastery wall Ommony was led away to a cell high up under a gabled roof, where a smiling old monk brought breakfast, laughing and snapping his fingers at Diana, not in the least afraid of her, but dumb when asked questions. He knew Ommony was no Brahman—laughed at the caste mark—touched his own forehead comically—and went out spinning a prayer-wheel that he kept tucked in his girdle whenever both hands were occupied; he seemed anxious to make up for lost time.

The unglazed window provided a far view of Kanchenjunga, twenty-eight thousand feet above sea level—twenty-one thousand feet higher than the monastery roof—a lonely, lordly monarch of the silences upreared above untrodden peaks that circled the whole horizon to the north. Six thousand feet below, the Rungeet River boiled through an unseen valley. For a moment all the boundaries of Sikhim glittered in every imaginable hue of green,

Om, of the heavenly world; *Ma*, of the world of spirits; *ni*, of the human world; *pad*, of the animal world; *me*, of the world of tantalized ghosts; *hum*, of the spaces of hell.

and between and beyond the colossal snow-clad ranges the eye could scan the barren frontiers of Tibet. Then, as swiftly as eyes could sweep the vast horizon, mist of a million hues of pearly gray, fantom-formed, changing its shapes as if the gods were visioning new universes in the cloud, rolled and descended, stunning imagination with the hugeness that could wrap that scene and hide it as if it never had been.

Then rain — cold, dinning rain that drummed on roof and rock, and splashed in cataracts to mingle with the spate of the Rungeet River crowding through a mountain gap toward the rice-green, steamy lushness of Bengal; rain that swallowed all the universe in sound, that beat the wind into subjection and descended straight, as if the Lords of Deluge would drown the world at last forever. Rain, and a smell of washed earth. Rain pulsing with the rhythm of a monastery bell, like the cry of a bronze age, drowning.

THAT bell seemed to clamor an emergency and Ommony hurried along cold stone corridors until he found his way into a gallery from which he could peer down into a dim hall through swimming layers of incense smoke. Silken banners, ancient but unfaded, hung all about him; images of the Gautama Buddha and disciples were carved on shadowy walls; the gloom was rich with color, alive with quiet breathing. He could see the heads of monks in rows, but could distinguish no one for a while because the heads were bowed and most of the light was lost in baffling shadows.

At one end was an altar, gilded and most marvelously carved, backed by an image of Chenresi. All the altar furniture was golden, and the monastery's pride—the book named *Zab-choes-zhi-khro-gongs-pa-rang-groel-las-bar-dohi-thoes-grol-chen-mo** — lay in the midst on a golden plate before Chenresi's image.

Dim music began and a chant, long grown familiar—that hymn to Manjusri that had thrilled so many audiences—and at last through the layering incense Ommony could make out the forms of the lama and Samding. The *chela* was holding the fragment of jade in both hands and was walking solemnly toward the altar, where the abbot and the lama waited to receive him.

The drumming of the rain on roof-tiles ceased. One shaft of sunlight, beaming through a narrow window, shone on the jade as the *chela* laid it on the altar, making it glow with green internal fire. The *radongs* roared. The hymn changed to a chant of triumph, swelling in grand chords that shook the roof beams. But Ommony hardly heard it. Something else, as the *chela* almost exactly underneath him, moved into the beam of sunlight, held his whole attention.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" he muttered.

He rubbed his eyes, made sure they were not lying to him by glancing at the image of Chenresi and at the rows of monks' heads, then stared again.

"May I be ——, if ——"

He looked at Diana, crouching in the gallery beside him, her head full of information that lacked only power of speech.

"I suppose if you could talk, Di, you'd lose your other gifts," he muttered. Then he whistled softly to himself.

Not for a fortune and a hundred years of life would he let up now! Let the Abor country be as savage as the fringe of Dante's inferno, as inaccessible as heaven, and as far away as righteousness, he would go there, if he must die for it!

"Di, old lady, this is the grandest scent you ever laid nose on! Mum's the word. I'll take a feather out of your cap!"

The service no longer interested him. He did not wait to see what they did with the piece of jade—no longer cared a rap about it. He was almost drunk with new excitement and a mystery compared to which the jade was mere mechanics—a mystery half unraveled that set his brain gallopimg in wild conjecture, so wild that he kicked himself and laughed.

"Maybe I'm mad. They say India gets us all sooner or later."

But he knew he was not mad. He knew he had strength enough and sense enough to hold his tongue and to keep on the trail with every sharpened faculty he had. He was itching now to get to Tilgaun, partly because that was mid-way to the Abor country, but for another reason that made him laugh because he knew he held a secret key that would unlock more secrets.

TO BE CONTINUED

*This has been translated to mean: "The great liberation by hearing on the astral plane from the profound doctrine of the divine thoughts of the peaceful and wrathful deities emancipating the self." Mr. Evans-Wentz translates it "The Book of The Dead," but this is a very free and decidedly doubtful rendering of the manuscripts shorter title "Pardo Todol."

THE THREE MISSING MEN

by Alan LeMay

Author of "Ghost Lanterns," "Hullabaloo," etc.

THEY sat in a beachcomber's shanty near Maranhao, on the coast of Brazil, three men missing from the ports of the world where they were wanted most. They were known to each other as Bill, Jim, and Sam; their last names, and the ports whence they came were unknown even to each other. With the curious tact of the tropics, each had refrained from asking.

Today an unusual and unheard of good fortune was theirs. Half a keg of rum had been brought in by the sea to the stretch of beach that they unofficially patrolled, and the occasion was one of celebration. The three missing men sat about a squat hogshead that served as a table, quaffing from time to time from the odd vessels that fortune had made theirs, and wasting the hot day in the comparative cool of the shade.

Bill was very broad and fat, with the jovial but earthy face of a billikin joss. Jim was a hawk-nosed fellow, loose-lipped, but of wild and piratical aspect; he was stripped to the waist, exposing hard muscles with "corners on 'em," and a chest covered with matted hair. Sam was a drooping, melancholy person, with a long nose that was bulbous at the end, and the air of one who, having long feared the worst, has not been disappointed.

Far out on the glinting blue waters of the Atlantic rode the tall white sails of a square-rigger. They could see her sails through the doorless opening that was the shanty's entrance.

"Looks like the *Mable Jones*," suggested Bill, pointing a pudgy finger, "don't she, Sam?"

Sam, whose back was to the sea, very slowly pivoted on his soap box seat, and viewed the distant vessel with profound deliberation. Then he slowly turned back.

"To that," he said weightily, "I answers yes, and ag'in, no."

"Mebbe she is," said Jim, rubbing a bristly chin, "and mebbe she ain't."

There was a brief silence, at the end of which the three missing men all took another drink, as if by common consent.

"Speaking of mysteries of the sea—" began the tubby one.

"Which we ain't," chanted Sam nasally.

"Speaking of mysteries of the sea," began Bill again, with slightly increased emphasis, "I never see the like of the goings on aboard the *Mable Jones*, when I was afore the mast."

The two others looked at each other, and slowly winked.

"But this is true!" protested Bill, sitting up straight to look at them with a pained expression.

"Aye, o'course," said Jim. "Go on with the yarn."

"In the first place," went on Bill, beaming broadly at this encouragement, "we weren't more than hull down from La Guaira afore we found that there was a seaman missing. There was his locker, and his duffle, and his ditty box—but no seaman. Missin'. I think his name was—I forget his name.

"We was bound for Rio. On the first night out a strange thing happened. The cook owned a pig. Maybe I oughta say the cook *had* a pig. Anyway, the pig was tied by one aft leg to a ringbolt in the deck. 'Long about two bells in the midwatch there's a terrible screechin' an' hollerin'. The voice sounded like the voice of a pig. I says as soon as I heard it, 'That noise is a pig hollerin'.' An' sure enough, when all hands rushes on deck, the pig is gone; provin' I was right."

"Wonderful," said Jim.

Bill glared and went on:

"High and low, we looked. We looked in the galley. We looked in the hold. We looked 'tween decks. We goes through all hands' dunnage in the fo'csle. No pig. An', sir, that pig was never seen again. Two spots o' blood was found on the deck, but that was all. Neither hide nor hair o' that pig was ever more set eyes on."

"Maybe he was ate," suggested Sam.

"Raw?" said Bill.

Jim was seized with an hysterical choking fit, and Sam sadly wagged his head, nonplused.

"Well, mates," Bill went on, "the very next night blew up black as a pocket. You couldn't see your nose to spite your face, as the sayin' goes. I was takin' my reg'lar turn at the helm, when suddenly I sees a sight that makes me blink. Yes, sir, I actcherly stood right there at the wheel an' *blinked*."

He paused, and seemed to meditate.

"What was it?" asked Jim, at last.

"Eyes," said Bill. "A pair o' green eyes, starin' at me in the dark, with such a look to 'em as made my blood run cold. And there I stood. An' there they stood."

"There who stood—the eyes?" asked Jim, winking again.

"Aye," said Bill, "an' there they stood, an' there I stood, me lookin' at them, and them lookin' at me, until the shivers run up and down my keel. I reckon we stood there upwards of a hour and a half. Then I ups with a belayin' pin, and whangs it at them. But just as I heaves the pin, the eyes disappears, like anchor lights gone dry, only quicker. So, o' course, I didn't hit them. Right there I made my mistake.'

"How so?"

"That pin is just in time to clop the Old Man alongside the head; just as he comes up the companionway," said Bill. "Next I hears is a terrible cussin' from the Old Man. I 'spose that was the terriblest cussin' I ever heard in my life, an' I've heard plenty.

"Then he comes stompin' back to the wheel, an' I figures some on jumpin' overboard; but I doesn't.

" 'Who threw that?' he asks, an' as soon as I see its me he's askin', I tells him I don't know. Then I tells him about them two green eyes, side by each there in the dark, an' he cusses some more. So he goes to work an' has me put in irons, on bread an' water, for two days, or as long as it takes for the swellin' to go down out of a man's ear."

"Served you right," said Sam solemnly.

"Why?" asked Bill with indignation.

"I don't know," Sam admitted.

"Well, sir," Bill went on, "there I sits in irons, in a black hole below decks, and thinkin' o' the sins o' the world. Up to that time I thought I had seen some rats aboard ships from time to time, but before I gets out o' there I realizes I haven't seen no rats before at all. All I ever see, up to that time, was just a few young mice.

"ON THE second night that I'm in this hole, the rats all leaves there, sudden-like. Them rats didn't just ooze away, one by one, neither. There's maybe sixty of 'em all gathered round, like a coroner's jury figurin' on what to do with the remains, some of 'em sittin' on my knees, you know, an' the like, when all of a sudden —*Whoosht!*—they're gone. An' they don't come back.

"Which I thinks is fine at first, but pretty soon it sets me thinkin'. An' the more I thinks, the more it seems to me like there's somebody walkin' round down there, soft-like, but I ain't sure. I'm still thinkin' that over when I goes to sleep.

"I wakes up to find somebody's sittin' on my chest."

"Says which?" said Jim, roused to interest.

"Somebody's sittin' on my chest!" repeated Bill.

"Garn!" said Sam.

"Yes, sir, mates, there he sits an' no mistake. When I wakes up I thinks it over a while afore openin' my eyes, an' I listens real close. All I hears is the feller breathin', so pretty soon I opens one eye, just half way you know, and takes a look.

"It's so dark down there, all I see is them two green eyes. Two green eyes set close together, and shinin' bright as runnin' lights, there in the dark. Green eyes, lookin' right down into my face, sarcastic-like!"

"Then what?" asked Jim.

"I hollers," said Bill. "Yes, sir, I hollers. I betcha they was vessels forty mile away that heard that holler, an' thought they was bein' hailed. Soon as I holler the feller disappears off my chest and the eyes wink out, like blinkin' shoal lights. He doesn't get up off my chest, mind you, or jump up, or roll off—he *disappears* off. An' all this, mind you, on top o' the pig, an' the seaman missin', an' them eyes lookin' at me on deck. When I thinks o' them things I keeps right on hollerin'.

"Pretty quick nigh onto all hands comes boilin' down the ladder. But o' course, by that time the feller has disappeared anyway, so they don't find nothin' but me, hollerin' my head off in the dark.

"They takes me to the Old Man, an' I tells him the whole yarn from start to finish. But you know how them square-head skippers is. You can't tell them nothin'."

"Ain't it the truth?" droned Sam.

"So he tells the mate to put down in the log that I'm clean off my nut and has lunacy, but is harmless when sober."

"Real smart skipper," murmured Jim.

Bill disregarded this.

"Bein' in irons has some advantages, though few. At the time they lets me loose, they is just piping all hands on deck for a rakin' over.

" 'Who done it!' yells the Old Man. 'Speak up, now, an' come clean!'

"I thinks at first that they're tryin' to find out who sat on my chest, but I finds out that such ain't the case. Everybody looks blank. It's just comin' dawn, and the light is real dim, but you can see the boys lookin' from one to the other, real mystified. Finally one of 'em pipes up—

" 'Done what, sir?'

'The Old Man just turns an' yells down the companionway.

" 'Mr. McPherson, come up here!' he says.

"McPherson bein' the mate, he comes up. When I sees him I near swollers my gizzard. There he stands, stiff and important, with one pants' leg ripped off clean. Yes, sir, mates, one pants' leg was tore off pretty near up to the waist.

" 'Done that!' says the Old Man, pointin' to where the pants' leg should 'a' been.

It comes out that the mate was walkin' along the deck, when all of a sudden he steps on a body. Next thing he knows his pants' leg is ripped off an' the feller gets away, an' no more seen of him.

"Well, sir, the boys stood there lookin' back an' forth from the Old Man to the missin' pants' leg, an' then to each other, and anybody can see that they don't know nothing about it. But a big long Irishman, by the name o' Paddy McClosky, he busts out laughin', so they claps *him* in irons.

" 'This monkey-business has got to stop,' says the Old Man.

"Well, it run along to the next night, all hands arguin' over what's what, but none of 'em knowin' anything. That day we decides to scrub down them things belongin' to the feller what disappeared, and divide 'em up amongst us. So we swabs off them clothes, an' the rest o' the dunnage, and long about night we weights 'em down on the forward deck to dry.

"Long about two bells in the night watch I happens to be on deck when I sees a sight the like o' which I don't never expect to see again on land or sea. Crawlin' aft along the wind'ard rail, comes that missin' feller's empty shirt, *crawlin' on its hands an' knees!*"

"Who ever heard of a shirt havin' hands an' knees?" demanded the melancholy Sam.

"Well, then," amended Bill, "crawlin' on its sleeves, an' the place where its knees would be, if it had knees. But, mark my word, knees or no knees, there ain't no such disturbin' sight, no place, as a shirt crawlin' along in the dark, all by itself. But I says nothing, knowin' as how they already got me marked down as cuckoo, and beginnin' to believe it myself.

"Well, here comes that shirt takin' little short steps, an' upwind at that, an' me backin' away from it, when around the corner o' the deckhouse comes McPherson,

the mate—he being' the same as got his pants' leg yanked off him. His eyes are bulgin' out o' his head, an' he's white as a new mains'l, but he goes toward that shirt, crouched over an' creepin' cautious. Mind you, it was a white shirt and we seen it plain, even in the dark.

"When he gets close, he makes a dive at it. But just as he dives that shirt slumps down flat on the deck, lifeless, like any shirt, an' there it lays when he lands on it.

"He picks himself up out o' the scuppers, lookin' wild an' foolish, leaves the shirt lie, an' goes aft.

"It turns out that two or three other seamen saw the same thing I saw, and the upshot of it is that we heaves the whole kit an' kaboodle of that missin' swab's dunnage over into Davy Jones' locker. An' if that's where he is, which is likely, he now has his shirt back."

"What a darn fool crew," said Jim, the piratical.

Sam wagged his bottle-nose back and forth sadly.

"Along in the midwatch, my bunkmate he rears up an says—

" 'Charlie,' he says——"

A curious look came over Bill's face, and in momentary confusion he took refuge in his flagon. With the curious tact of the tropics, the two other missing men refrained from asking him why at that time he should have been called Charlie. Bill collected himself, and went on:

" 'Charlie,' says my bunkmate to the man in the *next* bunk, 'somethin's been walkin' around this fo'cstle, catfooted an' soft, an' I don't like it!'

" 'Be like me,' I says, 'what isn't afeard o' man or ——.' "

Jim winked at Sam.

Bill continued:

"Nobody took no stock in them footsteps my bunkmate heard. Just the same, all hands was uneasy about the different things that had been going on, what with eyes in the dark, and pigs an' seamen disappearin', and pants' legs tore off the mates, an' shirts crawlin' up an' down the deck all by theirselves in the dark.

"Yarns began to get about of a night, about this here ship found driftin' derelict with all hands disappeared off her, an' that there ship what disappeared right square in the middle of a calm sea, an' all such like.

"BUT the night afore we touched at Bahia was the worst of all. Somethin' happened as put a cap on the whole business. It's been a slow voyage all along, seemin' to sail lively but not gettin' there neither, an' the more we sailed the worse we felt about the queer goin's on.

"All was quiet an' calm at about two-three bells in the midwatch. 'Twas a black night, overcast an' cloudy, an' no moon. All of a sudden all hands in the fo'csle was raised out o' their bunks by a sound the like o' which I reckon nobody ever heard on this earth afore."

Bill paused, and his face looked blank and scared, at the mere reminiscence of such a noise.

"What manner o' sound?" asked Jim after a silence.

"Well, mates, it wasn't a yell, and it wasn't a hail, nor yet was it a bawl. It come nearer to bein' a scream, but not like no scream you ever heard from the throat of man, nor woman neither. Nothin' earthly could make no such ghastly, inhuman scream as that.

"It rung out twicet, loud an' long, until the stanchions fair quivered. And mixed up with that second unearthly scream was the voice of a man, bellerin' in holy terror. Right after that the ship slued round an' the sails slatted an' whacked, an' she rolled, same as if she'd quit steerin' herself altogether, an' we thought the end o' the *Mable Jones* had come.

"We rushes up on deck. Both mates was dashin' up the companionway ladder, with lanterns swingin' an' banging', an' all hands rushes aft to where the row comes from.

"There, by the wheel, which is runnin' free an' idle, lays Sandy Smith, what has been takin' his turn at the helm.

"He's clean passed out, all white an' green around the gills, an' we thinks he's done for sure. And there wasn't a man of us that stood around him there that didn't feel creepy, crawlin' feelin's goin' up an' down his back, an' eyes lookin' at him out o' the dark from behind, until you couldn't help lookin' over your shoulder constant, to see what was there.

"Well, sir, mates, we sluices a couple o' buckets o' water on him, an' it comes out that he's still live an' kickin' after all, but so scared that he can't hardly tell what happened. Near as we can make out,

scared is all that *is* the matter with him, an' he keeps burblin' an' hollerin' till you don't know what's goin' on there anyway.

"Finally we makes out that he was standin' there holdin' the *Mable Jones* to her course, not thinkin' about nothin' in partic'lar, when he happens to step a pace back'ards. An' he steps on somethin' soft, like a man's hand. Afore he can even jump, there's this awful screechin' breakin' out, right behind him an' under his feet, an' somethin' grabbed him, like to pull him down. An' he don't remember no more.

"Then, when we gets him to his feet, what do we find?"

Bill paused for effect.

"The seat o' his pants has been tore plumb out!"

The fat sailor gulped another mouthful of rum, and looked solemnly from one to the other.

"Well," said Jim, "how did it all come out?"

"Mates," said Bill, "I don't know. Next day, while I was ashore at Bahia, I found out somethin' that kept me from goin' back on to the *Mable Jones*. Nobody was sorrier than I was. Hardly anything could 'a' kept me from stayin' with her, just to see what happened. But somethin' turned up."

With the curious tact of the tropics, the two other missing men refrained from asking him what turned up.

"Them goin's-on," concluded Bill, "is the curiousest I ever heard tell of, on land or sea. They remains as one o' the unsolved mysteries o' the sea."

THERE was a long silence. At last it was broken by Sam.

"There may be unsolved mysteries," said the mournful one, "but this here ain't one of 'em. I happens to know the answer, because right then I shipped from Bahia on the *Mable Jones*."

Bill looked resentful.

"Not in my place, you didn't. 'Twas Simon Dever, able seaman, was took on in my place afore she left; and another, a red-headed man, what took the place o' the missin' seaman."

"I was in a dory, outside the harbor," explained he of the bottle-nose, "and they flung me a line at my hail. It was under peculiar circumstances, it was, that I shipped out o' Bahia."

With the curious tact of the tropics, they refrained from asking him what the circumstances were.

"Two days out o' Bahia, we found a full-grown ocelot—that's a wild cat, like a jaguar, only smaller—livin' in one o' the boats, under a tarp. 'Twas the big cat what stole the pig, an' showed green eyes in the dark, an' sat on your chest, an' walked soft at night , an' lifted a shirt on his back, an' tore up the pants o' men. An' I heard that same screech when 'twas I that picked him up with a hook."

Bill was loathe to have his mystery exploded.

"But," he protested, "how about the missin' seamen? An' how come a wild cat aboard a ship?"

"I don't know," admitted Sam.

Jim stirred, stretched his knotty muscles, and spoke—

"I'm the missin' seaman," he declared, with a loose and evil grin.

"You?"

"Aye. I dived over the side at the mouth o' the harbor, leavin' my dunnage behind. It was my ocelot, you found. Tame she was, an' my pal. I hid her in the boat when I went on. But after we heaved anchor, I found out that I had to get off, for very special reasons."

With the curious tact of the tropics, they refrained from asking him how it was that he happened to get off the *Mable Jones*.

A rat stirred in the palmetto leaves of the roof. For a long time, Bill stared sadly up at the rat.

"Now, I ask you," said Bill to the rat in the roof, "what's the use o' spinnin' yarns for fellers like that?"

WHITE CHALLENGE

By Royce Brier

Author of "Burro Bells," "Foreign Parts," etc.

IT IS unlikely that the "Little Old Man" of Snowdrift Mountain slept more fitfully than was his wont on the night that James Weston Melvin's car flashed beneath the pepper trees of San Bernardino and roared up through Cajon Pass. Yet Melvin was of some moment to the Little Old Man, though, indeed, the Little Old Man was of more moment to Melvin.

Melvin had paused at San Bernardino for gasoline and oil, necessities he had neglected in his pell-mell flight from Los Angeles. His motor car, one rare but famous, its name synonymous for consummate luxury, had arrested the attention of the garage mechanic, but it was Melvin's sentence that startled him.

"Enough gas to cross the desert—tonight—an extra can," he said, his tone like the dull clank of steel on steel. It was with these words that the garage mechanic noted that his customer was in evening clothes.

He was a young man, Melvin, perhaps thirty, of a size a little better than medium, of a countenance a little worse than distinguished. He was of that type of young men from bond houses who gather in diminutive mahogany restaurants and shake dice for meals. He bore himself with a social poise which was cultivated and not intrinsic. His virility was based upon sheer acuity, and not inward fire. He was a man of steel, but he was not a man of iron.

He drove like mad. Up through the Pass his tires sang a never-varying song, a musical *whoooooooooo*, and on the arrow-line stretch of pavement to Victorville the speedometer clung quivering to seventy-two. There is an obscure but poignant enthrallment in the roaring of man-made machines in far places through the dead of night. The world sleeps, but one, aloof, with grimly restive spirit moves on—a gleam, a hum, a roar, a flash and a dying throb through the distant night. Half formless shadows dance, change swiftly, leer and beckon. The hours, like great murky monsters, stalk solemnly by, peering furtively at the intruder.

Victorville was asleep; even so, Barstow, as the great car plunged recklessly from the tableland into the town. A glaring locomotive eye in the Santa Fé yards, the alarming clanging of a bell—but Melvin was gone, engulfed in the impenetrable blanket of dust and night.

East of Newberry Springs the road is abominable. A rear window of the limousine shattered with a tinkle at some extraordinary torsion, but the driver did not glance back. Something far less than a roar branched from the Santa Fé Trail, but Melvin followed it; a dim, a wavering track, now rising over a lava flow, now all

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but lost in a dry wash. It seemed to rise, which was proof that it did, for the singular illusion of night touring in the desert is that of interminable descent.

With a wail of intermediate gear the car mounted a steep grade and rounded precariously a rock face. Melvin could not distinguish the landscape but he knew that he was entering a rocky defile and that considerable mountains were about him. He must have come a hundred and fifty miles from San Bernardino. He was amazed that so remote a road was passable. He feared it might lead to some mining camp, to men. He did not want to see men.

When the event came, which, with a not unnatural self-deception, he had thought to welcome, he was unprepared for it. He had been steeling himself to it through the flying hours, yet in the final moment he was unprepared.

He had meant to go over with the car. Scorning obvious self-destruction, he had chosen this mad way of going. He had meant to go out into the desert, never to return. It had been a plan of impulse, but it had seemed less savage than the way of men who brood in stuffy rooms with the blue gleam of automatics in their eyes. He had told himself that this was finer, a nobler way.

But he failed. Primal law, at the last twinkling, surged up to cheat him, as it has cheated men before him. Melvin felt a sudden drop of his right front wheel, sensed an abrupt side-sway, and as easily as a brakeman swings to the cinders, Melvin opened the door and stepped from the careening car.

There was a stupendous jar and a blinding flash of light, but whispering through the dark pool of coma into which the man slipped there came the scream of rending steel, like the collapse of some colossal, unheard-of machine on another world.

MANY men have striven in bleak despair to live upon the desert, but few have striven in that same despair to die. Melvin strove to die, or, more precisely, he strove against that involuntary will to live which is elemental.

With the coming of dawn he had awakened, a glaring pale-green glow in his eyes. He had a profound headache, and a sharp pain in his left arm. All about him was that pale-gray desolation which gives the desert, to those who have not sought out its brilliant color, the name of being white. The cañon in which he lay was this pale-gray, and it opened upon a pale-gray valley.

A column of smoke, dark against the far cañon-side, engaged the man's attention, and he dragged himself to the edge of the road to behold, a hundred feet below, the smoldering wreck of his car.

Without volition he arose painfully and started to walk toward the pale-gray valley. He was aware that his right arm was broken, and he was aware too how sorry a figure he must cut, a man in a soiled Tuxedo stumbling through the dawn in a remote pocket of the desert. Rattlesnakes, however, were doubtless indifferent to the attire of human intruders. Melvin could still smile.

He was struck by the folly of movement. Was one spot in the desert more likely than another in which to die? But his feet did not slacken. The will to survive prodded him, even when his reason would halt him. Men did not die by the holding of breath; men did not die in the desert without seeking life; it seemed.

A buzzard circled aloft and regarded the diminutive speck of a man issuing from the cañon. A prairie-dog village at the edge of the alkali wastes on the desert floor surveyed with gleaming eyes the stumbling giant. A kangaroo-rat and a vicious little sidewinder dropped their affairs to watch him, but Melvin was oblivious. He was little enchanted by this world. He laughed harshly as he pondered whether to cut across the alkali wastes or follow the road, which seemed to pursue the circle of hills. As if a choice were momentous!

All of that day he wandered straight ahead. He unconsciously set a bold peak, crested like an Indian's head-dress, for a goal. Toward evening sleep overcame him. He awoke to greater heat, and he wanted water, but laughed at himself for the wanting. He was weaker, far, than he had been the day before. His arm had swollen until he must slash his sleeve with a tiny platinum pocket-knife.

The buzzard was circling lower, today, and it had two companions.

The bold mountain drew nearer, but Melvin's steps became more faltering, his tongue more swollen, his thoughts more chaotic as the afternoon wore away. In the

crimson sunset the hills danced like brilliant-coated soldiers on a vast, glaring stage. Twice he fell to his knees, twice he arose and staggered on. He fell again, crawled a moment, then sank forward. Gradually the burning of the salt crust on his outspread hand slipped from his groping consciousness.

He did not know that a man turned him over.

MELVIN'S first ordered thought had to do with the braying of a burro. Then there was a man's voice, low and in a sort of lilt, that softened even curses:

"Jenny Lind, you —— old baby, shet that squalin'. We got a sick man what wants to sleep."

Melvin assuredly did not want to sleep. He wanted to ponder his rescue, the irony of it. He considered his present state. His arm, unaccountably, pained him less. It must have been set. He was in a night-gown, on a tolerable bunk.

With toilsome thought he looked about him. Here was a corrugated-iron shack, a small cook-stove and a large provision cabinet, a rude table, chairs. The shack was inexpressibly hot, but the door was ajar, and beyond a bronze bar of sunlight that reposed on the rough floor, Melvin could see the sparkling air of what must be another dawn.

A hen delivered a speculative *cluck-cluck* in the doorway. Melvin had hardly considered the fowl, when he found himself obliged to consider her master. The man was framed in the doorway, very much like a Santa Claus with drab garb for red. He had all of the earmarks, the beard that submerged his face and bobbed like a rabbit's tail, the polished, rosy cheek bones, the dancing, shoe-button eyes.

"By the Holy Buzzard, how's the ball-room stray!" was his greeting.

Melvin thought that courtesy, if there could be no unfeigned gratitude, demanded such smile as was within his capacity.

"Brother," said the man, his voice quite deep and resonant, lending a profound sincerity to the opening word, "you sutonly must've run aroun' yer house pickin' up pins afore you started on this trip."

He entered, tossed a shapeless and colorless hat upon the table, and proceeded to the provision cabinet.

"Outa here, Henrietta!" he flung at the venturesome chicken that had followed him into the shack. "I got names for ever'thing," he continued, busying himself with a side of bacon. "This bird's the oldest I got, so I calls her Henrietta—sorta representative of the speshes. An old rattler lives under my barn I call Nero, bein' he's the orneriest critter ever lived. Speared me in the leg onc't, an' I —— near kicked 'im to death. I got well sooner'n he did."

Melvin was quite clear in thought, now, sufficiently that he was certain the old man was insane. One who harbored a rattlesnake, and named him, must be some special kind of a "nut," though doubtless a harmless one.

"Where am I?" Melvin asked thickly.

The old man turned.

"Huh? Well, yer in good hands, brother. Yer a sick man, an' I'm the old —— that's goin' to git you back on the ball-room floor. Say, I had a pig broke his leg onc't. I didn't need no pork then, so I done a nice amputishon, an' made a wooden leg for 'im. ——, I didn't have the heart to kill that old boy after that, an' he died of old age. Pete Stuyvestant's his name. I'll fix you up just like him."

Though the parallel was not gratifying, Melvin could not forebear a painful smile at the old man's whimsy. It appeared, then, that he, Melvin, was to die of old age. What especial nomenclature the old fellow would alight upon to furnish a name for his patient was not presently apparent, but Melvin was certain it would be one bearing out his belief that the other's wit had gone a wool-gathering these many years.

It is such inconsiderable things as the pungent odor of frying bacon that make a mock of our most profound thoughts and our deepest imagery. Melvin found to his chagrin that he was ravenous with hunger. The old man was not averse to his eating, and by nightfall the patient was remarkably improved.

During Melvin's recuperative days the old man revealed that he had mined this district for thirty years, had infallibly taken fair pay, but had never made a strike, and, incredibly, never expected to. He said:

"If they's a ace hid in a pack of a million deuces, an' you pull a card a day, why I say yer heart is where yer brains oughta be, if

you figger on drawin' that ace in this life. I been takin' five, six, sometimes eight dollars a day for thirty year. I got a cozy fortune laid away. Some day, when I wanta die, I'll go down to San Diego an' lay aroun' till I die. I ain't hankerin' for San Diego an' dyin' yet, though."

"I want to die," Melvin had not meant to say it.

They were sitting this night at sunset, looking off into a bowl filled with blue distance, filled with the sparkle, the shimmer, the witching beauty of the evening desert. The old man puffed at his pipe reflectively.

"Then—I really didn't do you no favor?"

"You have done a fine thing, to care for me," said Melvin. "But I have nothing for which to live. I—I lost a million dollars."

Was there within Melvin the most impalpable sense of inadequacy? Men died for this each day, throughout the world, yet that vague, that irritating feeling of absurdity, of the need for justification, drove him deeper into a confession he had thought never to reveal:

"And the fortunes of many others," he went on. "I wrecked the Fruit Growers Bank—backing an automobile accessories factory. You know the atmosphere of Los Angeles? The electric atmosphere, the can't-lose atmosphere of all meteoric metropolises?"

The old man gazed off at the copper veil draped above the blue bowl of distance.

"Then yer name is Melvin? Yer father was a great banker, a big man. I read in the papers 'bout you."

"Yes, my father was a big man. One of those who serve first, one of those great bankers who die with but a million. Why, man, others have left twenty million, and not one twentieth of the respect and the command. And I—I am a little man——"

"A little man, I tell you—" his words flowed swiftly—"I held eight hundred thousand after the bank wrecked. Legally, I was clear. Morally, the small depositors should have had that eight hundred thousand. God! I couldn't face penury. I gambled it—told myself —lied to myself—I would triple it and pay a hundred cents on the dollar. I went into oil——"

He dropped his head with a shudder, remorse and that baser emotion, self-pity, striving within him.

"So you come out here to die?"

"Well, I tell ye," the old man resumed after an interminable silence. "You'd sorta laugh if you knowed what I been figgerin'. I been figgerin if eight hundurd thousand dollars could be seed with the nude eye out there in Snowdrift Basin. 'Tain't liable. You may be right 'bout comin' out to die in a place where what you was to die about wouldn't hardly be a speck. But I dunno. This desert, now, they's sort of a white challenge 'bout this desert. Maybe you get it; maybe you don't—but I been here some time, an' I seen it work out. This desert sorta puts you up against it. It says: 'If you got a man's soul, an' fight me, why, I gotta give you a chanc't; but if you got a pup's soul, an' lay down, then yer pickin's, an' you stay where you lay!' I seen you do some purty good hoofin' out there the other day."

"I couldn't stop."

"That's'a white challenge. Long as you keep on fightin'—say, life's like that an' men—well, some of 'em has a white challenge for you, anyways."

The old man seemed to ruminate deeply, his eyes half-closed in the purple gloom of the oncoming night, his gnarled old hand wrapped tightly about his now cold pipe.

"Yes sir, I think it's a law of life. I had a burro onc't named Abe Lincoln. A noble ol' jack—not ornery. 'Bout ten year ago I was marooned up in the Funerals, July freshet—when it rains in this country you think somebody's dropped a lake on you. They was a dry wash one minute, an' the next I was on a island, which was vanishin' *pronto*. Abe, he swam out, but when I called, —— me if he didn't turn tail to dry land an' start back. He was drownded an' I got out when that wet wash become a dry wash an' actual' dusty in 'bout ten minutes, but I claim there was a burro which flung out a white challenge an' died for it—laugh if you want to!"

THE Jim Melvin of a year later bore no more the semblance of the James Weston Melvin who had come to the desert to die, than the flashing dragon-fly bears of its chrysalis. There was the matter of shooting off a sidewinder's head at thirty feet—he had not acquired his partner's attachment for rattlesnakes. But this was but the superficial molding of the

desert. The greater thing was the fire within him, the iron in his soul.

Deeper and deeper grew his love for the old man. Whimsical, odd he might be, but Melvin knew that a saner man never lived, a man of more profound human understanding, a man of finer discernment, a man of gentler philosophy! John Johnson, that was his name, but he was known near and far as "Snowdrift," from the mountain upon which he perched, or simply as "Drift." Melvin had reason to believe that the commonplace John Johnson was not the only name of his partner; there had been once the hint of a bitter past in the days of the Black Hills.

They had several good claims, some owned in equity. With beginner's luck Melvin made a borax strike in the Gray Owl Mountains that brought them nine thousand each. For several months Melvin haunted the Gray Owls, and insidiously there took root within him the belief that there was infinite wealth there. Drift chaffed him over it, and Melvin straightway took up the cudgel.

"Jim," chortled old Drift, "I swear before —— you got miner's fever, yer a desert rat. You'll never git over it, my boy—never."

"All right—all right, but come over to the Gray Owls with me next week and I'll show you a valley——"

"Whoopee—I been over the Gray Owls with a pocket comb. They ain't nothin' there but dirt, an' maybe a little more o' that laundry soap."

But Drift went over to the Gray Owls with Melvin. The range lies thirty miles east of Snowdrift Mountain. It is not a notable range, but it holds all of the mystery, all of the malice, all of the defiance of the desert. In the bland gray walls there is a breach, a cañon with a white sand floor, shadowy, desolate, utter in silence. It led the prospectors ultimately to a cup-like valley that must once have been a crater, so ringed about was it with precipitous hills. It was evening. Great violet shadows lay on the desert floor like recumbent dogs, heads on paws, watching.

"By the Holy Buzzard, I only seen this pocket once—from the yon end," cried Drift. "Ain't it purty."

"That shoulder over there," said Melvin, "I want you to look it over. Looks like asbestos to me. Fibrous stuff."

"Asbestos!" echoed Drift. "Well, you'll be findin'-radio sets out here an' make a furtune. Us old fellas, 'bout all we look for is gold."

They circled the basin but it was too late that night to inspect the jutting shoulder, and they made camp to await dawn. Melvin had a keen sense of disappointment upon awakening to find that Drift was up in the golden sunlight, puttering about the camp.

"I seen yer mountain," said Drift, "but it ain't asbestos. It's sillimanite."

"Sillimanite?" Just faintly in his memory the word touched a thread, but that thread seemed to snap. He had all of the intense irritation of one with a word on the end of his tongue.

"It's purty rare," continued Drift, stabbing a can of beans. "They's more there than I ever see—but what the —— good is it?"

"That's the point——"

Again Melvin broke off abruptly, and again came that irritating prick of intangible memory. All of that day he wrestled with it, hoped for that dim and inexplicable surging of thought which oft-times solves these puzzles, but it did not come.

They went on, this way and that, finding that modicum of quartz color which is almost universal in the desert, but nothing worth more than a moment's pause. Two afternoons later they were back at the cañon mouth, Melvin with a poignant sense of bafflement. Jenny Lind, the musical burro, had gone astray, and despite her bell the prospectors consumed an hour in finding her. Drift pelted her with chunks of lava until he had her headed for the mouth of the cañon.

"Step up, there, Spark Plug!" he roared.

Abruptly he lost interest in the burro and stopped in his tracks. Melvin had emitted one shriek and straightway achieved a somersault he had never achieved in the Los Angeles Athletic Club.

"Plum' locoed!" breathed Drift.

"Locoed!" yelled Melvin, who had been about fifty feet distant, but was now slapping the old fellow on the back. "I guess you'll be locoed! *Spark Plug.* You crazy old son of a loon—that's what that stuff is for—spark plugs! Why, man, the big manufacturing companies have been looking for that stuff in commercial quantities for years. *I know.* Didn't I back three

cylinder accessory factories? Man, sillimanite's a substitute for porcelain, unbreakable under stress of heat."

"Well—" was all Drift could say, being somewhat out of his depth in a discussion of automotive industrial needs.

"Don't stand there like a blinking owl and 'well' me," shouted Melvin as if the other were deaf. "Seventy million spark plugs blazing away right now. Every year seventy million more, maybe twice a year. They need sillimanite. How do I know? Because my twelve-thousand-dollar car had sillimanite plugs, and they cost three bucks apiece, and because the technical trade journals say the stuff must be found in commercial quantities to bring it in reach of the five-hundred-buckaroo car owner. I read *that* while I was trying to get that gangling, decrepit factory on its feet with Fruit Growers Bank money.

"Drift, we're made!"

"Post yer claims," returned Drift, digging into Jenny Lind's pack. "If we can't trade this mounting in for ten million shares o' flivver stock, we can at leas' process the stuff into some nice chinyware to eat off of."

DRIFT'S voice trailed off as he gazed into the depths of the cañon by which they had entered the valley, and by which they had been about to depart it. A pack train of three burros was making its toilsome way up the defile.

"I guess," said Drift slowly, "we better post a discovery right now."

Melvin instantly caught his partner's meaning and swung astride his pony.

"Post yer claim on gold color," admonished Drift, conveying claim notices and stakes to Melvin. "Remember, it ain't any use to deny yer after gold, so we always admit that much."

Melvin was off in a cloud of dust, and Drift was left to employ himself with the ropes of a burro pack. Drift was ill taken with the strangers emerging from the cañon when he finally looked up at them. The taller of the two had a rodent cast to his face; the lesser had seen civilization too recently. They were young, and old prospectors distrust youth, unless it be garbed in Tuxedo.

"Whatcha doin' here?" was the bald question of the larger man, a query fraught with some peril in the desert.

"I'm prospectin' gold, young fella," returned Drift. The old man could smile in his gentle way, but he had not dwelt upon the desert for thirty years to become the humble servant of any straying insolence.

"Where's yer partner light out to?" asked the smaller man, failing to read that smile.

"My pardner?" Drift leaned back against Jenny Lind's flank and fingered his grizzly beard. "Well, now, that's what you might call a question what's hard to answer. Out here in these parts we don't ask much about where a man's goin', neither what he's doin'. Ye know—" he accentuated his words with a slight rhythmic move of his head— "I just plain—wouldn' have—the guts—to ask my pardner—where he was a-goin'."

The significance of this sentence was not lost on the two, for their faces darkened suddenly, and the big man snapped:

"Well, I would, old man. 'Specially, since me an' my partner has some sillimanite beds up here an' aims to work 'em right soon."

Drift was at pains to conceal a smile.

"I heered they was a sillimanite lode up here," he said innocently. "The country rock don't show it, but my pardner, now, he's found a seam in place, compass bearing of the course, north, northeast." Drift chuckled inwardly.

"None of yer smart-Alec stuff," growled the big man.

"None of yers!" said Drift in a staccato tone, lines on his leathern face deepening. "My pardner's made a sillimanite discovery. He says it's wuth somethin'; I say it ain't. But that's none of yer —— business!"

A gentle old man, willing always to fling out the white challenge to test guile, to give appearances another chance, Drift made short work of bald-faced evil intent.

"It ain't, huh?" snarled the big man. "You'll —— soon find out. Stick up them mitts!"

Drift found himself gazing into the muzzle of an automatic, but he was not unreasonably alarmed. The muzzle of an automatic has an air of finality in dark city streets, but the man who faces one on the desert is as frequently the winner as the loser. More complicated forces play, the event is less crowded by time, less bound to hard ritual. Drift knew this. He slowly acceded to the command.

"Purty strong lan'widge, brother," he said with his hands aloft.

"Git on that pony," ordered the big man. "Here, 'Butch' tie the old bird's mitts."

The little fellow went about it with alacrity.

"Aw right, now we go over an' see whose poachin' on our sillimanite preserve."

"You got claim notices posted?" asked Drift, suddenly concerned. The little man replied quickly:

"No, but we heered 'bout it——"

"Shut up!" roared the big man.

Drift was quite delighted as they started off across the basin. He considered leading them astray, but felt it would accomplish nothing. They would encounter Melvin anyway, and they seemed to know the general direction of the sillimanite lode. It was better he and Melvin be together.

Nearing the shoulder of the mountain where Melvin was going through the first steps of location, the two captors circled a rising hillock and a lava outcropping, arriving at an eminence overlooking a small, sand-drifted valley which spread to the base of the mountain. Melvin was discernible coming down from a small ravine a hundred yards distant.

It was soon evident that Melvin saw them, for he raised his right hand in signal. He had half-way crossed the small basin when he must have sensed treachery, for he swung sharply, but a moment after he did so, a cloud of dust surrounded the spot where he had been. The smaller man, with a rifle, had shot Melvin's pony beneath him.

"I guess we mean business," laughed the small man harshly for the ears of Drift.

Melvin emerged from the dust cloud, stood for a moment in uncertainty, then slowly raised his hands as he saw the futility of matching bullet for bullet with small arms. He approached the group and Drift was elated at his partner's composure.

"These gents don't seem to rattle afore they strike," Drift addressed Melvin. Then he turned to the large man, "Well, what'll ye have?"

The other's eyelids fluttered and narrowed.

"Just want that claim notice tore up, tha's all."

"What am I offered to do it?" asked Melvin coolly.

"Yer pack train an' one hour to beat it if you do; a plot of land six feet by two if you don't," spoke up the little man known as Butch.

"I've sort of got set on a plot fifteen hundred by six hundred, according to the mining laws," said Melvin. "It's a hard choice."

"Well, you better make it —— sudden," interposed the larger man with an ugly leer, "because there ain't no minin' laws in this deal."

"Well——"

It happened in a twinkling, yet there was a brief hiatus before Melvin or the two brigands knew what had taken place. Then Melvin saw that Drift's horse was clattering over the lava outcropping, Drift bound but clinging desperately. At the moment Melvin knew that Drift would be back to ambush their assailants, the small man who held the rifle knew it, and the small man shot once, and horse and rider tumbled. But the small man did not shoot a second time, for Melvin had the end of his rifle-barrel, and the two were rolling in the dust, madly clawing for the brigand's revolver.

To Melvin's astonishment his uppermost emotion was an ineffable joy. He saw that the big man was the slow thinker, for he stood for a moment stunned by events, and when he went into action he received a kick in the chin that was only a few pounds short of disaster for him. The burros, shy beasts at best, scattered in alarm as the big fellow rolled at their feet.

The surge of joy in Melvin persisted, like a wave reluctant to retreat from a beach. It was inexplicable. The big man slowly arose, white fury in his face, Melvin caught that in the tail of his eye, thought in a flash he should leap to the other, yet he was chained to the little man by that obscure joy of conflict. Then it was clear to him, through the cloud of dust, through the mist of sweat. The little man had killed Drift, Melvin believed. The thought was bare and raw.

He had the little man's gun half from its holster, now. It was anguished muscle against anguished muscle, hand against hand. The big man still floundered about for his automatic lost in the sand.

Melvin felt his little finger snap. Grunted a smile into the dry dust. He loosed his other hand from the grasp of his adversary. Brought it to bear on the gun. He

twisted the other's wrist—twisted—twisted. There was a deafening explosion.

Melvin's foe ceased resistance so suddenly so completely, that Melvin, tensed to that resistance, almost turned a flip. He heard directly another explosion and felt an irritating sting in his shoulder.

He was up blindly, lunging at the wavering, crouching figure of the big man dark against the dying sun. As he lunged, he tripped, and a bullet whipped through the hair at the back of his head. With the little man's gun, he shot upward, thrice, and the sharp sting in his shoulder was obliterated by a jar that plunged him into darkness.

He sat up with a jerk, and the mountains wheeled about him. He sat stupidly watching these mountains whirl, grinning like an idiot, knowing he had won something, knowing not what. He fumbled with a tenuous thought. Then, still the grinning idiot, he saw a tiny river of blood coursing down a crevice in the lava rock near him, and soaking into the white sand.

The big man, shooting at Melvin, had shot his own companion. He had done better the second shot, but the third shot had failed when Melvin tripped. And that had been the end for the big man.

Melvin was no longer the grinning idiot.

"Both through the heart," he muttered, gazing dizzily at the blood soaking into the white sand. "Well, I'll be ——. Funny it isn't black—the blood—funny it isn't black."

He found Drift beneath his dead pony. Drift was still breathing. Those were mad hours in which Melvin sought the elusive burros. He could capture only Jenny Lind, but she was able to haul the horse from Drift. Poor old Drift. Melvin cried while he worked. There are times when a man must cry, he decided.

Down through the cañon that Stygian night he cried again. But this time he decided it was a case of nerves, or perhaps that damnable leaking wound in his shoulder. This was not a time for tears. This was a bitter fight. Perhaps more bitter than that joyous one he had passed through a thousand years ago. Yes, a thousand years it seemed from midnight back to that dying sun.

And a bitter fight, with Drift, just breathing, bound to Jenny Lind, going down through the dark cañon and out into the desert. The blazing dawn came, and with it insufferable heat. A hundred times he would quit, and a hundred times he would not quit. Not so long as that faint, fluttering breath came from the lips of old Drift would he quit. He muttered to himself crazily.

That evening, on the east flank of Snowdrift Mountain, eight miles from home, he knew he could not go on. Like a beacon there flashed again and again the dim thought:

"Drift will die; I could get in on Jenny Lind!" Yes, he could get in, and he had a chance, while Drift——

Still holding to Jenny Lind's flank he staggered, sobbing, while the beacon flashed.

Up through the defile, quite swiftly, knowing home was not distant, Jenny Lind wound her way. Melvin's hand to her flank, clinging to a pack rope. To release her for one instant—all—all lost. Beyond flickering hope of retribution. He saw that in one radiant moment.

His grasp on the pack rope slackened, tightened again spasmodically, then slackened once again. The rope slipped through his fingers. Like a caress, a last, a passionate, a reluctant caress of life, his failing fingers slid down the creature's flank. The man slumped forward, recumbent, while the burro's hoof-beats faded, like faint whisperings, like dim recollections, like frail bubbles of the love, and the sacrifice and the white challenge of the desert.

"BY THE Holy Buzzard, it gits me!" said Drift. "You take those four fellas—'course, they was lookin' for the sillimanite when they come across me tied to Jenny, an' you down in the cañon. But how'd they know 'bout them other two? I still don't git that."

"You aren't supposed to get that," rejoined Melvin. They were on an electric train bound for Los Angeles. "You are a specialist in men, not commerce. I suppose each one of the four explained it at least once to you. You see, the four who rescued us were agents of a Los Angeles manufacturing concern, a scientific expedition. The Eastern trust also had an expedition out. But these two bandits had hired themselves out to both the Lo Angeles and the Eastern interests, and were going to double-cross both and play a lone hand. That's why they had to dispose of

as quickly. They knew the other two factors were on their heels. And if they met before the bandits located—good night! They were just a couple of combination gun and confidence men who chanced on a big thing, but I guess they found the game out there played under different rules than the alley-and-dive game of the city."

If this was still a little obscure to the forthright old man, it was Drift, strangely enough, who first gave voice to the perfect circle traveled by Melvin in two years. They had emerged from an office building that night, where a slim, elegant man had placed before them contracts offering two million dollars for the sillimanite lode.

"Well, by the Holy Buzzard!" Drift paused at the entrance to Pershing Square. "Didje git this: You back a auto company an' bust the Fruit Growers Bank; then you make a strike an' sell for two million to the receiver for the auto company that busted you."

"Snowdrift School of Business Administration," chuckled Melvin. Drift ignored him.

"An' that skinny dude *admitted*—after our John Henrys was down—that he had a offer from the trust for five million for the sillimanite. An' now he's gonna turn aroun' an' retire them wuthless bonds you bought for the Fruit Growers, an' which the state bank examiner has proberly been startin' his mornin' fires with—an' the examiner can pay a hundred cents on the dollar, an' you don't owe the depositors nothin'. Somebody's gotta get stuck."

"The chinyware industry," chortled Melvin.

"Laff in yer ig'orance, ye dad-blamed imbeceele; this is serious to me. I had forty thousan' dollars, ever' cent I saved in thirty year in that Fruit Growers Bank. I guess that proves the desert's got a white challenge for ye, gives ye another chanc't!"

But Melvin had slumped suddenly on a park bench, breathless, shaken. Drift spoke of the white challenge of the desert. Melvin's flaming thought was of the white challenge of a man.

"Y-yes—" he muttered hoarsely—"yes—yes——"

MASCOTS OF THE AMERICAN PHALANX

by Eugene Cunningham

WHEN William Walker, "King of the Filibusters," led his fifty-odd tall, bearded, straight-shooting redshirts to Nicaragua—with certain ideas behind his grim, pale face as to the real end of the expedition—the men had no pets. But soon after these "Fifty-Six Immortals" of the American Phalanx landed at Brito to attack the important city of Rivas, a yellow street cur deserted his flag and his fellows, left the scant pickings of Nicaraguan alleys and joined the Americans.

They christened him "Filibuster," and he rapidly became a veteran soldier. He took part in the assault upon Rivas; helped to capture Granada for the Democrats from the army of the Legitimist Party. After these major engagements he became a cavalryman, and never a scouting party of "the Rangers" but had his supervision.

But in a campaign against malcontents in the department of Chontales, Filibuster attacked with the Americans and fell in the front rank at Jutigalpa. When word of his death reached Granada some poetic "Falangino" printed a long poem to the dog's memory in *El Nicaraguense*, Walker's State journal. So we have Filibuster's description:

A gaunt and grizzled creature, with harsh and matted hair,
And eyes like some fierce mountain-wolf, just startled from his lair.
No pet for ladies' parlor, nor watch for lonesome hall,
But, Ishmaelite of canine life, he seemed the scorn of all.
Yet, strangely too, he followed us, on march or in the fray.
He was our constant shadow, at midnight or by day. . . .
In Jutigalpa's plaza our soldiers met the foe,
And a bullet from their riflemen full soon did lay him low.
He fell. 'T was in the van he fought; the charge he fearless led,
And died still bravely fighting for the cause he'd often bled.

Another dog, named Prince, succeeded him, showing the same fondness for the fierce warfare waged against the allied states of Central America by the American Phalanx.

CHUCKLING GOLD

An Incident in the Affairs of Mohamed Ali

By George E. Holt

Author of "The Adventure of the Third Scribe," "The Captive," etc.

"We have therein commanded them, that they should give life for life, and eye for eye, and nose for nose and ear for ear, and tooth for tooth."—AL KORAN.

SID ALLAL WARZAZI, recently *khalifa* of Fez, now the appointed *basha* of Tetwan, was riding from the capital city, where he had been a subordinate, to the town wherein he should be master. At his side rode Musa ibn Musa, who was to be *his khalifa* and behind them strung out a hundred riders—friends, supporters, relatives, fortune-seekers, adventurers, sycophants—who were going with him to see him take possession of his governorship. Some of them knew that profit was to be theirs. Others hoped so. And still others feared that their journey would be useless, but a newly appointed *basha* has gifts and honors in his hands—and he is not always a fountain of wisdom.

Sid Allal was excellently well pleased with the world; fully as much as were those whom he had honestly assured of office and honors under his régime. To be sure, Tetwan was not a great city like Fez; nor was it the capital. It was a comparatively unimportant town on the northern coast of Morocco; still the heart of its *basha*-to-be was glad, for it is much better, anywhere, to be king of a pond, rather than heir apparent of a lake. Especially when the *basha* one serves as *khalifa* is old and wise, with a wisdom which makes the gathering of a fortune by his subordinates impossible—or inadvisable.

Several fortunes had passed through the hands of Sid Allal, on their way to the treasure chests of the *basha* of Fez, his master. At the memory of this fact, he cast a thoughtful eye at the one who rode beside him. No doubt this man, as his *khalifa*, would seem as honest and faithful as he himself had seemed; and without doubt he would bear as close watching.

At the thought, Sid Allal smiled grimly to himself; if there were any tricks of money-gaining which were hidden from his knowledge, his *khalifa* would be welcome to the winnings.

This thought carried him straightway to another, which concerned the two sacks of gold coins which were in his saddle-bags. The *basha* had not known of them, otherwise—Hm! Otherwise they would be in an iron-strapped chest in Fez, instead of traveling toward Tetwan six inches behind his back.

He had been lucky there; assuredly Allah had smiled upon him. First, to have learned from a suspicious officer of *maghaznis* that Sid Walid M'Barak and Sid Hamed Mortadi, scribes of Mohamed Ali, were in Fez at the house of Sid Walid's cousin. Next, to have caught them there. Next, to have had them offer the two sacks of gold to the officer, just as he, the *khalifa*, had entered the room.

Then, that Sid Walid had been killed, although his fellow scribe had escaped. And finally, that the officer of *maghaznis* had been sent, by a bullet from the pistol of

"*Chuckling Gold*," *copyright, 1924, by George E. Holt.*

the first scribe, to a place where he could not communicate with the *basha* concerning the gold.

Truly, there had been a handful of good fortune in these things. It was an easy matter for him to slip the gold into his *shakarah*, while the two *maghaznis* of the dead officer were making sure that Sid Walid was quite dead; and to proclaim bitterly that the escaped first scribe had taken it. The excitement had been brief, but intense enough, so that he was certain no thought of the gold had been in the heads of his soldiers, who were only stupid fellows anyway.

Thus, he had gained approval from the *basha* for the slaying of Sid Walid; he had secured a sum of more than a thousand pounds sterling; and now he was riding in honor to take over the governorship of Tetwan.

Truly the smiles of Allah were pleasant. "His Excellency, the *basha* of Tetwan." It was a toothsome title. And, without question, he would some day possess that of "His Excellency, the *basha* of Fez," or perhaps even greater. Had not El Menebbi, a black kitchen slave, recently become Vizier of the Shareefian Treasure, and very wealthy thereby? "Sid Allal Warzazi, Vizier of the Treasury." Ah! That was a title, a noble title.

But in the mean time Tetwan waited, and there were riches to be seized in Tetwan—offices to sell, immunities to be retailed, perquisites and concessions to be vended, protection to be profited by—and great amounts of taxes to be collected by the simple process of throwing into jail as many as the jail would hold, assessing them as much as they could pay, or more, and holding them in prison until they, or their friends, paid the assessment. And for each man released, another would be found to take his place, so that the profitable game could continue a long time—probably until the arrival of a new year with its new taxes.

This, thought Sid Allal, was the great advantage of being *basha* of a small town rather than *khalifa* of a big one. *Khalifa* of Fez he had been. Bah! Scarcely one real out of every dollar of taxes had he been able to retain for himself. Besides which, the *basha* of Fez had been a fool—he could have gotten twice as much had not his heart been the heart of a cow.

"We shall see," thought Sid Allal, whose heart assuredly was not that of a cow. "The people of Tetwan shall make me rich within the year, or they will desire that their mothers had never been born."

His head filled with such pleasant thoughts Sid Allal rode toward his governorship; while Allah, with mercy in His heart towards the kindly folk of Tetwan, looked down into a little village hidden among the foothills of the Atlas, not a great way from Tetwan, and decided to set in motion certain people whom he saw there.

As a preliminary to this he caused one of the riders at the tailend of the *khalifa's* following to lag far behind, to be lost to sight when the procession, like a huge lizard, wriggled over a hill, to turn his horse and to ride swiftly away on an eastward course which led him at approximately a right angle away from the *khalifa*. This was not observed. But had it been, it would have attracted no important attention, for on such an occasion as this, villagers were constantly joining the procession, to ride a little way, to share a little in the general enthusiasm, and then to drop out.

IT WAS a good horse which this deserter of glory rode, as a result of which it took its rider before nightfall into the little hidden village among the northern Atlas foothills where Mohamed Ali, his cousin, lay. There, in a poor hut, he pulled off his dusty *djellaba* and threw himself upon the cushions where his kinsman squatted at ease.

He was now revealed, in brightly silken shirt, velvet *badayah*, or vest, well garnished with silken embroidery applique, baggy pantaloons of fine broadcloth, and of a robin's egg-blue, color, white wool stockings and new soft-soled leather riding boots of velvet-soft green Marraksh leather.

Mohamed Ali looked at him, and grunted.

"Humph! If fine feathers made brave birds, you would be an eagle."

Now, Mohamed Ali's cousin, Mustapha, was a little undersized for his eighteen years; somewhat pale of skin, with gentle brown eyes and a ghost of a mustache, and a quick smile. That was the visible outside; and as for the inside of him, he had no great merits and no great vices—which is only another way of saying that he had only a very commonplace imagination.

Mustapha was obviously somewhat sophisticated, and temperamentally lazy. A little wit—enough, perhaps, to suit his very ordinary learning—gentle admiration of, and respect for, his famous cousin Mohamed Ali, who rewarded him for such news of value as he might pick up in Tangier. There he had many friends who were no better nor worse than himself, but who, like him, learned by the mysterious methods of the under classes, everything that had taken place, was taking place, would, should or might take place.

"An eagle is what the cousin of Mohamed Ali should be," replied Mustapha.

He drew a silvered case from his *shakarah*, selected a cigaret, and offered the case to his uncle.

"Allah, no!" growled Mohamed Ali, pushing the offering hand away. "The cigarets you smoked last time you were here gave me an illness from which I have not—hm!—entirely recovered."

"These, however," said Mustapha, "are not French, but English. And they are excellent. I remembered that you did not like the other sort, and as you were generous with me for the information concerning the affair of the German clerk, I was enabled to purchase not only new eagle's feathers, but English cigarets as well."

Mohamed Ali laughed. Many a time he had dandled this impudent youth as a baby upon his knee, and he knew Mustapha as well as Mustapha knew him, or almost as well. Still laughing, he lighted one of the boy's cigarets.

"And, Sid Allal?" asked Mohamed Ali then, squirting the creamy-tasting smoke of Virginia through his nostrils like a fire-breathing dragon in "The Thousand Nights and a Night."

"Sid Allal rides to Tetwan, strutting like a rooster in his heart, or it may be his head, or his liver. However, he is but little less than Allah, and not at all lower than Mohamed."

His cousin swung quick eyes upon him, scenting a jibe.

"Mohamed?" he barked. "The Prophet—or Mohamed Ali?"

A cheerful grin graced the face of Mustapha.

"Assuredly not Mohamed Ali," he answered. "His conceit cannot be so great!"

"Hmph! Son of *Shaitan!*" *

"And cousin, thereby, to Mohamed Ali," broke in the lad.

Mohamed Ali switched the words into the main road.

"You rode with him?"

"*Aiwa*, I rode with him. At Wazzan I met him and his men. With them I traveled until this midday, when I left them at Ber Rayyan. Tomorrow, an hour or two before *el moghreb*—sunset—they will reach Stawan.† They travel but slowly of course."

"Naturally," agreed Mohamed Ali. "Tomorrow. Hmph! We have plenty of time." And he rose and went for a thoughtful stroll in his favorite olive grove.

Now, the town of Tetwan is little more than a day's journey by foot from the village where Mohamed Ali and his friends found refuge. That is, by the regular road. But this time can be shortened materially by a traveler who knows the trails which lead over the hills instead of around them, and who has the legs and wind required for their passage.

It is a very pretty and unusually clean little walled town—where some streets are arched over with grape-vines, and flowers are to be found in pots in most unexpected places, such as in front of the booth of a slipper-merchant, or at the gates of the tan-yard.

Tetwan has, necessarily, its *sok*, or marketplace, and more than its share of native beggars. This latter fact no doubt results from the charity of the kindly people who love flowers and other beautiful things. People who love flowers are never miserly, and where there is much generosity there are always many beggars.

But the beggars of Tetwan themselves seem to absorb some of the spirit of the city: They are better fed, of course, than most beggars, and therefore they are happier as well as fatter, and their cries of "*All'arbil All'arbil*—alms in the name of Allah the Compassionate—" are more like the cheerful announcement of a street vender than like the doleful and beseeching wails of the beggars of such a place as Tangier, for example. And furthermore, because of the charity of the good people of Tetwan, there is no need for such constant crying; and this,

* Father of Evil. † The native name for Tetwan or Tetuan.

considering the number of mendicants, is a very good thing.

Now it was quite natural that upon the day of the coming of the new *basha*, the good Tetwanis should be in holiday mood, decorating their houses and shops with streamers of ribbon or paper, circulating about the streets and exchanging greetings and gossip, and, in short, taking advantage of a perfectly good excuse to have a holiday.

Holidays mean good-nature, so it was also quite natural that every Tetwani beggar was busily circulating his begging-bowl, and that every other beggar within a day's journey had come to share in the harvest. Dozens arrived during the night and slept outside the walls until the city gates should be opened.

Not an hour of the day but saw others arrive—tall beggars and short ones, skinny and fat, beggars with two eyes, with one eye, and with no eyes at all; aged beggars and beggars who were still young; beggars led by children, or by each other, or by dogs; beggars with scarcely rags enough to cover their bodies, and beggars wrapped to the eyes in miserable garments. Lame and halt and blind, clean and diseased, many with mouths and noses and many with dirty bandages where these facial-organs should have been.

Among these were a dozen who to the casual eye differed in no wise from the others. There was one difference, however—but one which would have been noted only had they been brought together and carefully inspected—which was that the faces of all were so concealed by dirty bandages as to cause one to suspect that severe toothaches had become epidemic, and each one wore, upon the shoulder of his outer garment, a tiny piece of red cloth, no bigger than a silver coin. Red is the color of Islam, and Morocco is as full of sects and sub-sects as a Moroccan dog is of fleas. And every society has its own peculiarities.

NOW, about midday, the retiring *basha*—Sid Es-Suani by name—was alone in his official chambers, engaged in not unpleasant reflections upon his release from public office. Sid Es-Suani was a good man, and being not a fool could quite appreciate the fact that few good men seek public offices, and few hold them for any great while; either they give them up—or they cease to be good men.

While he was thus occupied a slave approached him.

"O Sidi, a beggar at the door insistently requests audience with your Excellency. Shall I drive him away?"

"You know the rule concerning beggars," replied Sid Es-Suani inattentively. "Give him a coin, and your blessing."

"But, O Sidi, this man desires neither a coin, nor a blessing—and he is a big man!"

"Ho! He desires not a coin. He is no beggar then." Sid Es-Suani laughed. "Or perchance he desires two coins. Try him with two coins. And two blessings," he added dryly, as the slave turned.

The black went away, but speedily came back.

"He desires *no* coins, and *no* blessings, O Sidi," he reported. "Furthermore, he says that he has coins and that Mulai Achmed, his father, has already laden him with ble—what said you, Sidi?"

The *basha* had jumped a little.

"Let him enter, I said."

The slave, salaaming, withdrew.

"Mulai Achmed, his father, eh? Hm! Hm! A beggar who will not accept coins—Hm!"

The door opened, and the slave entered, followed by a huge mendicant, arrayed in rags, head covered by the *koob* of his tattered *djellaba*, face half concealed by a bandage.

"Go, now," Sid Es-Suani ordered the slave, and turned keen eyes upon the beggar. Eyes met eyes for a breath—and the *basha* laughed.

"Your father, Mulai Achmed, may have laden you with blessings, but *Shaitan*, your original ancestor, bequeathed to you his audacity."

"Is it audacity to visit—a friend?" asked the beggar, and his eyes smiled. "May not a beggar look at a—hm!—a *basha?*"

"A retiring *basha*," returned Sid Es-Suani grimly.

"But still *basha*," answered the beggar. "Still *basha*, and still able to render a service, to the son of Mulai Achmed?"

"To Mulai Achmed I owe my life," replied the *basha*, and his face was serious now. "And to his son I owe, and have, friendship. If that which he desires——"

His voice trailed off in question.

"Only this—" answered the beggar, and explained his desires in a dozen words.

Then, grinning, he brought a black wooden begging-bowl from beneath his garment, extended it, and wailed—

"*All'arbi! All'arbi! All'arbi!*"

But, although he smiled, the *basha's* eyes were speculative as he looked at his friend the beggar, son of Mulai Achmed.

A fanfare of trumpets, near at hand, was echoed by other trumpets farther away, outside the walls. The *basha* rose.

"He comes," observed the beggar.

"I go," replied the *basha*.

"Go with Allah, then," said the beggar.

"May He remain with you," offered Sid Es-Suani.

The *basha* strode from his office, closing the door behind him; mounted a horse which stood ready for him at the portal, and followed by his subordinates and friends rode to the city gate, where he was to meet the procession of Sid Allal Warzazi.

The offices and courtyard were thus deserted, save for a dozen beggars squatting about in shady corners. A careful inspection would have revealed the fact that upon the shoulder of each one's *djellaba* was a tiny spot of red cloth.

No sooner had the *basha* ridden away, than one of the beggars arose, strode to the door of the office and entered. The son of Mulai Achmed greeted him briefly, crossed the room, and sweeping aside a great velvet curtain, revealed a small alcove, in which were floor cushions and nothing else. Inasmuch as all the room was hung with the same sort of velvet *haitis*, or coverings, no one would have suspected that the alcove was there.

"I had this made," said the son of Mulai Achmed, "and it served its purpose. It saved my life, when *I* was *basha* here. Now I think it will serve my purpose again. Enter. Ah! Warzazi has entered the city."

Came the sound of trumpets again, and the sound of guns firing. Soon the sounds drew nearer, and the cheering voices could be heard.

"The lambs welcome the wolf," whispered the son of Mulai Achmed to the other beggar. "He will soon be here."

The sounds grew louder, nearer, then subsided. The listeners knew that the entrance to the palace courtyard had been reached, and that the populace would there begin to disperse. The noise that reached them now began to break up into its component parts—horses' hoofs on the cobblestones, the brogans of the guard, voices, the rattling of metal parts of harness.

In a moment more the door of the *basha's* office was flung open and Sid Allal Warzazi, he who had been *khalifa* of Fez, strode in, slamming the door behind him. He flung himself upon a great silken-covered cushion and looked about him at the walls of the room, of which the only decorations were the velvet hangings, at the great Rabati carpet which covered the whole floor, except for the space taken up by the yard-wide cushions that occupied three sides, and for one corner, in which was a small, iron-bound box.

His black, negro face was tired and dusty, but his little black eyes glowed with the occasion, and with greed. Carefully had they noted, as Sid Warzazi rode through the crowds, the apparent prosperity of the good people of Tetwan, the comfort of their streets and houses, the texture of their garments, the jewelry of the women. Food for a *basha!* Food for a *basha!*

HIS wandering eyes fell upon the strong-box in the corner, and for a space he surveyed it with narrowed, speculative eyes. A key was in the lock.

"Hm!" he murmured then, "we must get a larger one. My predecessor must have been a fool. However, for the present——"

He took from his *shakarah* a small but exceedingly heavy cloth bag, and another. They chuckled, as only gold can chuckle. Rising, Warzazi threw back the lid of the strong-box, tossed the bags of gold—the gold that had cost the life of the second scribe—into the box, turned the key, took it from the lock, and straightened up. His body stiffened sharply, for something hard was prodding him in the back, a hand was gripping his shoulder and a voice was saying, commandingly—

"The key!"

Warzazi whirled swiftly as a snake strikes, one hand ready to seize the pistol which he knew was behind him, the other hand reaching for the long curved *kumiah* at his belt. On his lips was the unuttered name of his *khalifa*. But as he whirled, the man behind him stepped backward a pace even more swiftly—and the *basha* found himself looking into the muzzle of a pistol in the

hand, not of his *khalifa*, but of a big, bandaged beggar in a tattered *djellaba*.

The sight, the discovery of his error, the failure of his plan to disarm his enemy, combined to shake his nerve. The key to the strong-box fell from fingers momentarily out of control. The beggar stooped to pick it up, but the vicious pistol did not waver from the target of Warzazi's heart.

"Unlock the box and give me, Sid Walid's gold," commanded the mendicant, holding out the key.

At the name of Sid Walid, who had been Mohamed Ali's second scribe, fear smote the heart of the black *basha*, and suspicion, knowledge, pressed upon his eyelids with a numbing hand. He looked keenly at the beggar, his eyes seemed to penetrate the bandage.

"Mohamed Ali," he groaned. "May Allah aid me now!"

"As He aided Sid Walid," answered the beggar. "Open the box."

A queer bird-like cry was uttered by some one outside. Mohamed Ali heard it, and smiled faintly.

Warzazi extended a trembling hand to take the key—hesitated. He saw the door behind Mohamed Ali opening, with so little noise that it seemed not to reach the covered ears of the beggar. He saw his *khalifa* step into the room, saw his eyes bulge with surprize, saw him draw a pistol and come forward swiftly as he did so.

"The gold was not Sid Walid's," lied Warzazi, playing for time. "Nor did I— Hah!"

The pistol of the *khalifa* was nuzzling the beggar's spinal colum.

And then, much to the surprize of Sid Warzazi:

"Don't move," ordered the beggar quietly, seemingly not at all startled by the man behind him. "And, if he desires you to live, your friend will not shoot. I would yet have time to pull the trigger."

Before he had finished speaking, the *basha* saw another thing. The curtain behind the *khalifa* was thrown aside, and from the alcove stepped a second beggar who without delay thrust a pistol into the back of the *khalifa*. The *khalifa* trembled but held his gun against the back in front of him.

"Allah *kerim!*" exclaimed the *basha*, who was not without a sense of coarse humor. "It appears like standing dominoes in a row. If one falls, all fall."

For three breaths the situation remained poised. Then the second beggar reached forward and took the gun from the *khalifa's* hand, thrust him aside, and turning, sent home the bolt which locked the heavy door. After which, he set to work binding the *khalifa* with his own turban. And a cowed *basha* placed into the hands of Mohamed Ali two heavy bags of gold.

The second beggar, having finished his job of tying, thrust a wad of turban-cloth into the mouth of the *khalifa*, seized him by the shoulders and dragged him into the curtained alcove.

"Lie there," he said. "You will probably be repaid for your present inconvenience by becoming *basha*."

"That," he observed, going to Mohamed Ali's side, "disposes of him. Now, as to this other——"

He slid out of his ragged *djellaba*, revealing the fact that he had worn two. He unwrapped a length of dirty turban-cloth, and several lengths of stout camel's-hair cord from about his waist. And then he proceeded to remove the rich garments of the *basha*, aided by Mohamed Ali. This done, and the fine clothing thrown into the alcove with the *khalifa*, the *basha* was arrayed in beggar's rags, his face bandaged, and the *koob* of the dirty *djellaba* dropped low over his forehead. The bandages which covered his mouth also covered a gag which prevented outcry. And about his neck were two nooses of strong camel's-hair cord, arranged with knots which would slip but one way, which could be tightened, but not loosened. From the nooses the cords ran down beneath his sleeves and were fastened at his wrists.

Warzazi was not a fool; he saw what was being arranged. Not only would he choke himself to death if he ventured to use his arms without great care, but anyone holding his wrist could speedily cut off his earthly existence. And no one would know what ailed him, until they had stripped him. That, obviously, would be a tardy business.

"Let us go, now," said Mohamed Ali, at last. "You—understand?"

He turned his scowling eyes upon the beggar-*basha*, who nodded, perforce in silence.

"I walk on one side; Sid Hamed Mortadi——"

A frown came from the *basha*. He had not recognized the other beggar.

"Sid Hamed on the other. We will hold your wrists, and the cords, unostentatiously but firmly." He smiled with his eyes. "And should we be—hm!—incommoded, no one would find the cords for quite a while. *You* would not, I think, be interested in their discovery. Come!"

He removed the key from inside the door, thrust back the bolt, opened the door a little and reinserted the key from the outside. Then he opened the door and they stepped outside. Immediately they were cut from view by other beggars who rose up and came to the door, crowding about them. Behind this human screen, Mohamed Ali closed and locked the door and put the key into his *shakarah*. Then, in a body, the dozen beggars, with the little red spots upon their shoulders, moved swiftly toward the city gates, passed them and their guards—Warzazi's own men, now—and took the road which led into the wild hills. Among them, one of them, walked Sid Allal Warzazi.

An hour's walk, in a silence that weighed down the soul of the captive, and they stopped on a hilltop beneath a spreading argan-tree, where a dozen horses were tethered. Here the *basha* was relieved of his gag and his nooses and his tattered *djellaba*.

MOHAMED ALI looked at Sid Hamed Mortadi, his First Scribe. "He is yours," he said, "because of Walid."

He drew his knife and tossed it at the feet of the *basha*.

Sid Hamed only nodded in reply. He removed his *djellaba*, drew his own *kumiah* from its sheath and stepped towards Warzazi. Facing him, he spoke.

"I am going to kill you," he said. "Pick up the knife and fight."

Warzazi looked once into the eyes of the friend of Sid Walid, then stooped swiftly and seized the *kumiah*. Crouching, he circled his opponent, as one dog circles another, looking for a favorable opening, drawing closer. He sprang at last, his knife met the blade of Sid Hamed, twisted, and he jumped back. About them the other beggars had formed a big circle.

Warzazi stood his ground against the approach now of Sid Hamed. He feinted, Hamed struck, and both knives found flesh, but only in the arms of the fighters. The yellow dust formed a mist about them. Beads of sweat were forming on Warzazi's face. He fell back before the onslaught of his foe, dodged a blow at his neck, whimpered and thrust upward at Hamed's bowels, and missed—and then the thing that was really the black Warzazi mastered him. He reached swiftly inside his silken vest—a small flat automatic flashed and spoke, and the knife flew from the hand of Sid Hamed.

A shrill cry of anger came from the circle of spectators, but before any one of them could move from his tracks, Sid Hamed sprang like a tiger upon his treacherous enemy. He bore him to earth. He tore from his hand the pistol and flung it far. He set a foot upon the hand that still held the knife. And at Warzazi's black throat he set his two hands in a grip of death. No word from his lips—only a low continuous growl of the animal that treachery had loosed within him.

At last he straightened up, lifted by the neck the body of the black, and threw it from him. He gazed at his hands, curved and paralyzed for a moment by their effort, then straightened them.

"Walid," he murmured his dead friend's name, over the body of the man who had killed him. "A life for a life. It is so ordered."

EIGHT SECONDS

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

By John Webb

Author of "Henri II," "A Case of Silver," etc.

THOUGH it was still early in the afternoon, there was no sun; nor was there even a sky. Sandy Hook, though but a few short miles to the northward, was in another world; and the New Jersey coast, less than five miles to the westward, did not exist. Even the ocean had disappeared, and no longer existed; there was nothing—nothing but a gray-black ship and a sea of fog.

At times the fog swept athwart the vessel's course in great gray sheets, though there was no wind, then it would whirl and double back upon itself; it formed eery fog-caverns and grottoes, and tunnels; as if swift, invisible ships were passing in all directions, leaving whirling, rolling clouds of mist behind them. Vaporous streamers floated aft from the vessel's bows. The seas were long and smooth; the ship pitched sluggishly, and each sweep of her mast-heads started eddies of mist.

The ship was the *Hawk*, a narrow-waisted, flush-deck freighter of the old-time coast type. She had once been black, but was now gray with age—and grayer still with the fog-shadows. She was steaming at greatly reduced speed, because of the fog; for such is the law; and sea law—when applied to merchant vessels—is precise and very stern. Her immediate destination was Port-au-Prince, her final destination Cristobal; her port of departure was New York. Her master was John McGuire—"One-Two Mac," they called him.

Captain Mac stood now in the wing of the bridge, in the lee of the weather-cloth, with both long, large-knuckled hands upon its upper edge, holding it down from before his eyes. He was of middle age, of medium height, black-eyed, black-haired, straight-lipped; a somber, thoughtful little seaman. His black rubber boots, oilskin coat and sou-wester glimmered dully with moisture, and his tanned face, lean and firm, was wet with mist. Now and again he shook his head so that water sprayed from the brim of his sou'wester.

He swung about, and his darting black eyes strained to pierce the rolling fog-clouds—to starboard, astern, to port and ahead. A pucker of worry appeared between his eyes and one corner of his mouth lifted in a grimace.

"Fog!" he muttered.

"It's thick as pea-soup, sir, sure as ——" agreed the second mate, standing in the center of the bridge with one hand on the whistle-lever and the other on the engine-room telegraph.

He leaned for six seconds on the whistle-lever; the whistle howled its doleful warning. The fog softened the sound, deadened it; turned it and sent it echoing dully back at them.

"I can jump farthur than that carried," commented the second mate.

Captain Mac said nothing; but the corner of his mouth lifted higher and the pucker between his eyes deepened. It is not storms, but fog and faulty chronometers,

that make shipmasters old before their time.

Captain Mac's frown suddenly deepened; he stood for a moment with his head on one side and his eyes half-closed, then turned to the second mate.

"What did you hear?" he asked sharply.

"I—I thought I heard a steamer, sir," answered the second mate, slightly bewildered.

"In which direction?"

"Ahead, sir—I think," and he pointed over the bow.

"No, no," said the captain impatiently; and he called to the lookout, in the port wing—"Hear anything?"

"No, sir."

The little captain lowered the weather-cloth by casting off the stops that held it suspended from the ridge-rope; then he leaned far over the bridge rail and stared fiercely ahead and over the port bow. The second mate tightened his grip on the handle of the engine-room telegraph and glanced at the space on the indicator marked "Full astern." The lookout in the port wing stood stiffly, motionless, and with a fixed forward tilt of his head. The man at the wheel spread wide his feet, braced himself, and with upturned palms tensely gripped a spoke on each side of the big wheel. He expected an order, a sudden order, and was prepared to start the helm in either direction at the first syllable.

It seemed, in spite of the slow, steady throb of the engine, that the *Hawk* was stationary; that she was merely teetering seesaw-like on an axle run thwartship through her middle. She was stationary; it was the world of fog that was moving, passing astern.

Again the second mate leaned on the whistle-lever; again the whistle loosed its mournful howl.

The sound had hardly died when there came an answer, a startled, frightened blast from close off the port bow. It was followed quickly by four short blasts, and out of the sea of gray slid an oblong of white—the bow of a ship.

"Hard aport—full ahead!" cried Captain Mac; and he snatched the whistle-lever from the second mate's hand and gave one short blast, to tell the stranger-ship what he was doing to avoid the impending collision.

"The darn fools will take chances," grunted the captain.

The *Hawk's* stern swung to port, her bow to starboard. The engine throbbed faster; the vessel trembled and her speed began to increase. The other ship was backing frantically.

Swiftly the two ships came together; but as they neared each other the *Hawk* swung so that she was nearly parallel with the other's course and heading in almost the same direction. Only a few seconds passed, it seemed, before the *Hawk's* port quarter was so close to the stranger's starboard bow that an agile man could have leaped the intervening distance, and the distance was decreasing.

"Hard a-starboard!" ordered the captain then.

The *Hawk's* stern swung to starboard, and she rushed ahead, and passed around the other vessel's bow like a vehicle going around a corner.

"Stop!" ordered Captain Mac when the ships were clear.

The stranger ceased backing, swung about and came slowly after the *Hawk;* and as she approached, a man appeared in the wing of the bridge with a megaphone.

"Good work, cap'n!" cried the officer when he was within hearing distance.

"What the —— have you got a whistle for?" retorted Captain Mac, ignoring the compliment. "Why don't you use it? D'you want to be cut in two?"

"This is the United States Coast Guard Cutter *Binghampton.* Have you seen a man adrift in a small boat?"

"No."

The cutter was sheering off now, and the man's voice came faintly; part of what he shouted next was lost.

"Well, we're looking for him. If you see him——"

The officer gave a final wave of his megaphone, and the cutter disappeared in the enveloping fog.

"Now, why the —— didn't he give fog signals before we almost ran him down?" asked Captain Mac thoughtfully.

"Maybe he did," said the second mate. "In this fog, you know——"

"Rot! Sound carries as far in fog as it does in clear weather—sometimes farther. Why, I could hear the pound of his engine and the thrash of his propeller before I saw him. Slow ahead, Mr. Scott, and sound your whistle."

An answering jingle came from the

engine-room; the *Hawk* pulsed with life, began to creep ahead, and again felt her way through the fog.

The wheelman blinked into the binnacle, took a spoke and gave one. The lookout, after a furtive look at the master, eased his feet by leaning with his elbow on the rail. The second mate stood with one hand on the telegraph, and sounded fog signals at two-minute intervals. Captain Mac frowned into the fog ahead.

The fog was still thick as wool, but now it was drifting lazily across the bow in an easterly direction.

"Breeze coming from off shore, sir," said the second mate.

Captain Mac nodded.

The breeze freshened, and the fog drove seaward in slow coils; the coils thinned and became fine, gray whorls of mist. The mist became thinner and thinner, and a blue line of coast stood out here and there on the western horizon. The sun broke through; the sky appeared, and the sea; the sea turned slowly from gray to blue.

"You needn't blow the whistle any more, mister," said Captain Mac. "Fog lifted at 3 P.M.—enter it in the log-book. And full speed——"

He suddenly ceased speaking, raised himself on his toes and gazed ahead.

"What's that ahead, Mister Scott?" he asked.

The second mate left the center of the bridge and came into the wing, where he leaned over the rail and followed the master's gaze. He stared long and earnestly, then shook his head and rested his eyes, and with a shade of resentment in his voice,

"I see nothing, sir," he said.

"Nothing?"

Captain Mac smiled on one side of his face, the side away from Mr. Scott; then he reached under the rail and snatched the binoculars from their box, and leveled them ahead. The second mate found another pair, put them to his eyes and regulated them carefully.

Far, far ahead a speck of black rested on the blue of the swelling sea. The second mate too could see it now. It might be anything—a box, a cask, a spar, a boat——

"It's a boat," said Captain Mac, "and there's some one in it."

"I'm not sure—" began Mr. Scott; but the little captain cut him short:

"No? Hold your course and speed, mister, till we come up with that fellow. You don't see that cutter yet, do you?"

"No, sir," answered Scott, after sweeping the horizon a-stern with his glasses. "There's a big gray tramp heading in, but no cutter."

The black speck grew slowly larger as the *Hawk*, still at reduced speed, bore down upon it. Soon they could see without the aid of binoculars that the object was indeed a boat, and that there was a man in it. The man sat still in the stern-sheets, upon a thwart, and interestedly watched the old freighter coming toward him. The man had evidently been rowing, for one oar was still in its rowlock and the other lay atop the thwarts. A blue uniform cap, without gold or insignia, was pulled low over his eyes; he was coatless and his blue cotton shirt was wide open at the neck.

"That fellow looks like a sailor," commented Captain Mac, studying the man through his glasses.

"Yes, sir, he does," agreed the second mate. "Looks like a pirate, to me. Gosh, what a face!"

Captain Mac ordered the engine stopped; the *Hawk* ran out the way on her and rolled easily a hundred yards or so to windward of the man in the boat. The man crawled slowly and painfully over the thwarts, put out the oars and came pulling weakly toward them. A blur of white on the bow of the boat became a name—*Sabine*.

"*Sabine*, eh?" mused Captain Mac.

"Yes, sir. She's an old yacht. Remember we've been seeing her hanging off Jersey for the last six months?"

Captain Mac nodded.

"Rum-runner, Cap'n, I think."

"No doubt."

The boatswain and his men had a pilot ladder over the lee side and were standing by to toss the boat a line.

The *Sabine's* boat bumped alongside, and the man dropped his oars and stood up. He ignored the heaving-line that fell across the gunwale, and stepping onto the bottom rung of the pilot ladder, shoved the boat adrift; then he came slowly, wearily up, climbing as if he were nearly exhausted. Strong arms helped him over the rail, and he dropped heavily to the deck, then staggered to the nearest hatch and sat upon it.

"Water!" he grunted.

A pitcher of water was brought and the man drank greedily, with a gurgling noise.

He paused, gasped for breath, and again raised the pitcher to his mouth. The boatswain, a cockney, stepped to the man's side, put out a restraining hand and said:

"'Ere, now, myte, ye'll myke yerself —— well sick if yer don't slow up."

"Get 'way!" snarled the man, drawing back his lips fiercely. "I've been two days in a boat without water. Plenty o' fog —— it, yes; but no water!"

Again the water gurgled noisily down his throat.

Mr. Tenny, the chief mate, came from 'midship.

"Ye look like ye been havin' kind of a tough time of it," he said to the man. "How long ye been out there?"

"Two days."

"How'd it happen?"

The man set the pitcher beside him on he hatch, but kept tight hold of it with one hand. He looked at the mate from under long bristly eyebrows and his nose, broken and slewed over to one side, twitched like a cat's. He closed one eye and pursed his lips, and softly whistled a few notes of a hauling chantey. A patch of puckered white skin on his forehead stood out in strange contrast above his mahogany face.

"How'd it happen? Well, I'll tell you," he said at last, with a nod and a peculiar sidewise tilt of his head. "You see, two days ago I left the—" He paused; then shot out quickly—"Did you see the name on the boat?"

"Yes—*Sabine*."

"Ah!"

For some seconds he sat turning something over in his mind; then he nodded, and went on:

"Yeah—the *Sabine*. Well, two days ago I left the *Sabine* and tried for land, in that boat you saw. Less than three miles off shore, we were, but fog—whew! Couldn't see the peak of my cap through it. I had a good bearing and started out with an easterly wind at my back; but I lost an oar, and while I was paddling around trying to find it, the wind must have shifted. I had no compass—left the yacht in what you might call a hurry, you see. I found the oar all right, but I've been pulling around in the fog ever since. That's all."

He put the pitcher again to his mouth and began to drink.

"But what did ye want to leave your ship for?" asked Mr. Tenny.

The man merely looked at him with one eye around the uptilted pitcher. At length he set the pitcher down, and water dripped from the corners of his mouth and glistened on his pelt-like chest.

"Ship's the *Hawk*, eh?" he said, ignoring the mate's question. "Yeah. Saw it on the bow. Out of New York? And for where?"

"Port-au-Prince and Cristobal. But why did you leave th' *Sabine*, I asked ye?"

"Port-au-Prince, eh?" ruminated the man, paying not the slightest attention to Mr. Tenny. "And Cristobal. The *Hawk!* Well!"

"I ask ye——"

"What's your name?" countered the man.

"Tenny," answered the mate, surprized.

"Right. Mr. Tenny—shut up! You found me in a boat and my name is—" he paused—"Brown. That's all you need know."

Mr. Tenny swung about and went toward the bridge, to make his report to the captain. Brown left the hatch and strolled aft. Reaching the ladder that led upward to the wireless room and the operator's sleeping quarters, he paused; then, with a very thoughtful look on his brown face, and a wrinkling of the skin of his nose, he went up.

Captain Mac shook his head as Mr. Tenny complainingly told him of the interview with Brown.

"What's the difference who he is or where he comes from or why?" he said when the irate mate finished. Then to the second mate, "Mister Scott, call the wireless operator to the bridge."

The second mate spoke into the telephone that connected the bridge with the wireless shack, and a few minutes later the operator came shuffling along the boat deck from aft.

The operator's name was Coleman. He was a young man with an old face and shifty eyes that were sometimes sparkling and sometimes dull. His body was frail; his chest was narrow and he seemed continually gasping for breath. Now there was a look of worry upon his thin, white face.

He halted respectfully at a short distance till the captain motioned him to advance.

"Coleman, get in touch with the *Binghampton*, coast guard cutter, and tell the master we've picked up the man they were looking for. If he wants him, tell him we'll steam slow till they overtake us. Got it?"

"Yes, sir," answered Coleman, fumbling nervously with a bit of loose black braid on his uniform coat. "Yes, sir."

He turned hesitatingly and shuffled aft toward his shack.

Eight bells—four o'clock—rang; Tenny took over the watch from Scott and the four-to-eight wheelman came to the wheel. Scott, having written up the log, was leaving the bridge with his oilskin coat on his arm when the captain stopped him.

"Mr. Scott, I wish you would find a place for that fellow—Brown?—to sleep, in case the cutter doesn't want him. And you, Mr. Tenny, let me have the *Binghampton's* answer as soon as he gets it."

Tenny nodded respectfully; and then muttered:

"Yeh, if he gets it. I don't think much o' that operator—never did."

Scott was surprized, upon entering the wireless shack, to see Brown standing with one foot on the sill of the doorway that led to the sleeping quarters. He was talking in a low voice, but as the second mate entered he closed his teeth on a word and fell to whistling tunelessly. Coleman, his phones on, was sitting in his chair before the apparatus.

"Get 'im?" asked Scott shortly.

"No," answered Coleman slowly, fingering a dial and listening. "No, sir. The *Binghampton's* talking to—to a shore station, and I can't interfere. It's—it's against the rules."

"Let the cap'n know when you get 'im."

"Hard to get a ship in these waters," commented Brown, thoughtfully rubbing the patch of puckered white skin on his forehead with the tips of his fingers. "There's so many ships about, and so many of 'em talking at once——"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Scott. "Well, it doesn't matter—we're going full ahead without waiting unless he wants us to. Tonight you can sleep in——"

"I've found a place to sleep," said Brown quickly. "There's a spare bunk in the wireless man's room, and he says I can sleep there as far as he's concerned."

The operator started, and straightened in his chair; then he slumped forward and began fingering his dials again.

"All right?"

"If it suits you it suits me," answered the second mate. "I guess you'll be as well off there as anywhere else. Of course the cap'n'll turn you over to the American Consul in Port-au-Prince.

"Yeah," said Brown, his nose twitching. "Ye-eah."

He turned and went into the sleeping room, and could be heard softly whistling his favorite chantey.

THE principal element in navigation is time. There is no such thing as accurate off-shore navigation without accurate time. Ship time is based on chronometer time; and chronometers all over the world keep the same mean time—that of Greenwich, England. The chronometer, though merely a highly accurate timepiece, is the most important of all aids to the navigator, more important than even the compass; for while a navigator without a compass may have some trouble in getting to his destination, a navigator without a chronometer knows not where he is, and thus can have no idea of the direction of his destination.

The *Hawk* carried two chronometers, one a standard and the other a "hack," the latter a cheaper instrument that was taken to the bridge when needed and, as a result of being handled, could not possibly keep time as accurately as the other, with which it was compared both before and after being used, for the purpose of checking. The standard chronometer was hung on gymbals in a close-fitting, glass-covered, felt-lined hardwood box, and this box was in turn set in another box. Both instruments were side by side in the chart room, abaft the bridge.

At nine-thirty that night, by the ship's clock, Captain Mac came to the bridge. In one hand he had his sextant and from the other the case containing the hack chronometer hung by its strap. He carefully placed the chronometer on the shelf hinged to the rail, and went with his sextant into the starboard wing of the bridge. Tommy Downs, the third mate, silently got out paper and pencil, and cupping a flashlight in his hand over the face of the chronometer, waited patiently.

"Polaris," called Captain Mac over his shoulder, and Tommy Downs wrote the word at the top of the paper.

The captain glanced calculatingly at Polaris—the Pole Star—and judged its distance above the faint horizon; then he set his sextant and put it to his eye.

"Time!" he called after nearly a minute had passed.

The third mate wrote on the paper the hours, minutes and seconds that he read on the face on the chronometer.

"Altitude," called Captain Mac, holding his sextant in the oval of light that shone from the compass binnacle, "39-03-30."

The third mate repeated it, and wrote it down.

"Jupiter next," said Captain Mac, and he turned his back on the Pole Star, over the stern, and faced forward.

Again Tommy Downs took the time and the altitude and wrote them down; then Captain Mac took the paper and the chronometer and went into the chart room to work out his observations.

"Has the wireless operator been able to get in touch with the cutter yet?" he called through the open door.

"No, sir," answered Tommy. "He says the cutter was talking all afternoon, and now, he says, she won't answer."

"Humph!" snorted the little captain; then, after a moment, "Let me know when the time warning goes, Mr. Downs."

"Yes, sir."

Tommy Downs glanced at his cheap nickel-plated watch, then fell to pacing the bridge. The night being clear, the lookout was standing his watch on the forecastle-head, and only Tommy and the wheelman were on the bridge. The oval of light from the binnacle shone full on the wheelman's square, Scandinavian face, leaving the rest of him invisible, and now and then a big hand gripping a spoke passed through the beam of light as he took or gave a spoke.

Soon the light in the chart room went out as the captain finished working his sight and retired to his cabin, abaft the chart room, and Tommy Downs, after a hurried sweep of the horizon, started for the door.

"Keep an eye ahead, Larken," he said to the Dane at the wheel. "I want to get my pipe from the chart table drawer."

"Ay, sir," answered Larken; and before Tommy reached the door, "Light on the port bow, sir, I think."

"I think that's a star just popped over the horizon," said Tommy, turning back, "but I'll take a look with the glasses."

He took the glasses from the box and put them to his eyes, and stood for a while looking at the light on the eastern horizon; then, satisfied, he put the glasses back in their box.

"Looks like Venus," he said, and strode to the chart room door.

With his foot on the threshold, he halted, and started back. Some one was there, leaning over the chart table and studying the chart by the faint light that filtered between his fingers from an electric torch cupped in one hand. With the other hand the man was stepping off distances with a pair of dividers.

Tommy silently withdrew the foot he had placed on the threshold; for by leaving the bridge while on watch, even for an instant, he was breaking a sea law, and the man by the chart table was probably Captain Mac; though why, thought Tommy, should he strain his eyes the way he was doing when he could flood the table with light by pushing a button not two feet from his hand? Curious, he hesitated, and stood for a moment looking into the room.

And then, just as he was about to tiptoe back to the bridge, a ray of light broke between the man's fingers and Tommy saw that the man was not the captain, but a stranger. In the instant that the light flickered upon the man's face there stood out a flat, crooked nose, a ghastly white forehead and a lean brown cheek.

Tommy stepped boldly into the room, clutched the stranger with one hand and snapped on the light with the other.

"Now who the —— are you?" he demanded.

The man did not start at the touch of Tommy's hand; in fact, he remained as still and motionless as the table he was leaning upon. Then, very slowly, he faced about. He was calm and unperturbed, almost indifferent; nevertheless, in the set of his body, and in his slow movement, there was a suggestion of tenseness and alertness. His gaze rested first on Tommy's shoes, then traveled slowly up the youth's six feet of bony frame to a point between his eyes.

"Me?" he said then. "I'm—Brown."

"Brown? That doesn't mean anything to me."

"No-o? Well, you see, I was the—a member of the crew of the *Sabine*, and I was picked up in a boat by——"

"Oh! So you're the fellow we picked up today! I was asleep, but I heard about it. But what's that got to do with sneaking in here and pawing over our charts?"

"I didn't sneak in, old-timer. I walked right in that door."

He pointed to the starboard doorway, opposite the one by which Tommy had entered.

"Walk right out again then! If One-Two Mac had seen you he'd 'ave lifted you one under the chin!"

Brown's nose wrinkled and twitched like a cat's. He cocked his head on one side and squinted at the third mate with one colorless eye.

"Say, mister," he said, "will you answer a simple question?"

"Spit it out!" snapped Tommy, angrily, for there was a great deal about this man that he didn't fancy.

"Our first landfall is Watling, eh?"

"Yes."

"Huh-huh. D'you suppose this One-Two Mac of yours would put me ashore there if I spoke nice-like to 'im?"

"No, he wouldn't. I'm sure of it. You'll be turned over to the American consul in Haiti. That all you wanted to know? Well, then—beat it!"

Brown went to the door, held it open with one hand and again faced Tommy.

"One more question, mister mate."

"Shoot it!"

"How would you like me to smash your face in sometime?"

"Come on—try it—now!" cried Tommy, starting forward.

But the man was gone, and the door slammed in Tommy's face.

As Tommy left the chart room three short *buzzes* came from the bridge, and he went to the captain's door and knocked.

"Stand by for time, sir," he called.

"Thank you," answered Captain Mac; and he came from his room and entered the chart room.

Tommy returned to the bridge.

"Say, Mister Downs," called Captain Mac.

"Yes, sir."

"Some one has left the standard chronometer open. Was it you?"

"Why—no, sir," said Tommy surprized. "I haven't touched it since I wound it this morning."

"All right."

The leaving of a ship's chronometer case open is in the minds of navigators a very grave offense, as the chronometer is a delicate instrument and extremely subject to moisture and changes of atmosphere. Tommy swore beneath his breath.

"I'd bet it was that —— Brown mooching around," he thought.

A SHORT, quick *buzz* sounded. This was the time signal, which is sent out twice daily—at 12 noon and 10 P.M.—by the wireless station at Arlington, Virginia, and by which all ships within hearing determine the errors of their chronometers.

Captain Mac came to the bridge.

"According to that time tick," he said, "the chronometer is eight seconds faster then we thought it was. It's one minute and twenty-nine seconds fast, by the tick, whereas by my figuring it should be only a minute and twenty-one seconds fast—eight seconds difference."

"Eight seconds!" exclaimed Tommy. "That's a lot. That can't be."

"Hardly," said the captain, smiling faintly.

"The wireless man made a mistake, I guess," said Tommy, and he went to the 'phone and pressed the button.

"How about that time tick, Sparks?" he asked, when the wireless man answered.

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Was it on the dot?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Downs, it was a good, clear signal."

"And you didn't lose any time relaying it to the bridge?"

"No. No."

"No lag?"

"No, sir—no lag but the usual twenty-five thousandths of a second."

"All right, Sparks."

"No matter," said Captain Mac as Tommy put the receiver on its hook. "I know darn well he did make a mistake, whether he admits it or not. Eight seconds! Why—let's see—four seconds of time is a minute of longitude—that would put us full two miles to the east'ard of where we ought to be, and where our dead reckoning says we are. Impossible! I don't believe it."

"Two miles isn't so much," said Tommy doubtfully.

"It is when you have to make a lightless landfall on a dark night."

"But Watling Lighthouse——"

"Is out of commission. If you had read that Notices to Mariners sheet I clipped to the chart you should know it without being

told. It says that Watling light is undergoing repairs and must not be relied on till further notice. We should make the landfall after midnight. That's why we need a good time signal, so we'll know whether or not we can depend on our observations."

"That's right, sir. Maybe we'll get a good one at noon tomorrow. We've got three days before we can expect to see Watling."

When Tommy Downs was relieved at midnight by Scott, the second mate, he walked aft to the wireless room. Before going to bed, it was his custom to read the radio press news broadcasted each night between ten and eleven by Arlington for the benefit of ships at sea.

Coleman was bent over his typewriter, typing several copies of the news from scribbled memoranda. Tommy stood behind Coleman and read what he had typed, then he glanced at the penciled notes.

"Say, Sparks," said Tommy, "there's a paragraph you left out," and he picked up the sheet of notes and began to read:

"Yacht *Sabine*, narcotic and rum-runner, set fire to by owner-captain after running battle with U. S. Coast Guard cutter. All members of crew captured but Captain Ted Breen, international criminal, wanted for murder, bigamy, gun running and narcotic smuggling. Police of four countries on lookout for him. Department of Justice officials expect to——"

"Here, put that down!" cried Coleman, noticing for the first time what it was that Tommy was reading. "How do you expect me to copy it when you are walking around with it?"

Tommy looked at Coleman in surprize; never had he heard him speak so boldly and determinedly. And then, as he looked, he saw that the boldness and determination was merely a result of some stronger emotion. Coleman's lower lip was between his teeth and there was a wild, scared expression in his eyes.

"Give it to me," insisted the operator, reaching for the paper.

"Keep your shirt on! What're you getting all excited about? I just wanted to read this paragraph you missed."

"I didn't miss it. It's—it's a mistake, that part about the *Sabine*. I couldn't get it all. No—there was a lot of static——"

"Static? In these latitudes, and at this time of the year?"

"Yes—a lot of it. I couldn't get that item straight. The names are all wrong, I think. I just put down what it sounded like. That's why I—I wasn't going to type it, because I wasn't sure——"

"All right. Stop boxing the compass. What're you trembling about?"

"I'm not trembling—I'm shivering. It's cold in here."

"Cold? You silly goat, it's hot!"

"No, it's cold, I tell you. That's what it is; it's cold. I'm shivering with the cold——"

"All right—all ri-ight! There you go getting excited again. There's something wrong with you; your face is as white as a sheet and you're trembling all over. You better go turn in."

"I—I think I will," said Coleman, and he got up, snatched the sheet of notes from Tommy's hand and stumbled into the adjoining sleeping room.

THE *Hawk's* master and three mates were on the bridge, and in the hand of each there was a sextant. They were waiting for the sun to climb to the meridian, when they would observe its angle from the apparent horizon and calculate the ship's latitude.

"Here comes 'Crooked-nose,' " remarked Scott. "Wonder what he wants?"

"He wants his nose knocked straight, if you ask me," said Tommy Downs.

Brown came to the bridge, strode boldly up to Captain Mac and touched his cap with a deference that his face and manner belied.

"A word with you, cap'n?" he said, with a calculating squint of one eye.

"Certainly."

"Well, here it is, man to man and straight from the shoulder: Will you put me ashore on Watling Island? Just quiet-like, without telling the British consul all about it? Eh?"

"I will not," said Captain Mac. "I shall follow maritime law and custom and turn you over to the American consul at my first port of entry—Port-au-Prince."

"Yeah. We-ell—how about me and you talking this thing over privately, kind o' quiet-like, where the whole ship's company ain't standing around with their ears flopping in the wind? Eh?"

He cast a half-humorous, half-contemptuous glance at the three listening mates, then turned his back on them.

"Whatever you have to say, say it here and now—and say it in a hurry, because the sun's nearly on the meridian and I want to catch it."

"Say it and get it over with—just like that, eh?"

"Just like that."

"That's the way I like to hear a man talk—straight from the shoulder! This great-circle style o' chewin' the rag be ——! Now I'm going to talk to you the same way you talk to me. *You* say I'm going to Port-au-Prince; *I* say—I'm not! Hear me now—I say I'm *not* going to Port-au-Prince! My reason is my own—but I'm not going!"

"The only way you can keep from going there," said Captain Mac calmly, "is to jump over the side. I can't stop you from doing that; and to tell you the truth, I don't care a —— of a lot whether you do or not. I like neither your looks or your style. I have neither the authority nor the desire to put you in irons as long as you're peaceful, but if you get rough, start trouble, I'll clap 'em on you so quick you won't know how it happened."

Brown made his cat-like grimace, and pursed his lips.

"Besides," continued the little captain, "I don't put much stock in this *Sabine* story of yours about——"

"*Sabine?*" exclaimed Tommy Downs, staring from Brown to Captain Mac. "*Sabine?* Is he from the *Sabine?*"

"Of course he is," said Scott. "Didn't you see the name on the boat— Oh, that's right; you were asleep. Sure he's from the *Sabine.*"

"*Sabine*—Brown—Breen! You're Ted Breen, the dope-runner!" cried Tommy; and he put down his sextant and clutched "Brown" by the collar.

"Let go!" grunted Breen. "Let go, you scut!"

He wrenched himself free, and sprang back. The skin of his flat, crooked nose became twitching brown ridges. One eyebrow lifted and the other dropped, and he sucked wind so fiercely that it whistled through his puckered lips.

"D'you see?" he cried to Captain Mac. "I ain't botherin' anybody; I'm keeping the peace—it's this big cow that's starting trouble!" And then to Tommy: "Stay 'way, now, you big lummox! Stay 'way—I warn you! All right, then, you —— fool; if you will have it——"

He set himself with wide-spread feet, and as Tommy, overcome by his anger, rushed, he drove one fist with terrific force to the third mate's stomach and swung the other club-like across his face. Tommy went down rolled over and scrambled to his knees, but as he gained his feet Mr. Tenny and Scott pounced upon him and held him tight.

"You saw it, Cap'n, you saw it," said Breen. "No irons, One-Two Mac, no irons—I didn't start any trouble——"

He stopped in amazement as he saw the expression on the little shipmaster's face. For Captain Mac was smiling; a faint, thin, crooked little smile that was beyond Breen's comprehension. What could it mean? Here was a man who smiled while other men were fighting. And then he saw that the smile was one of sarcasm, and that the sarcasm was directed at him; and in that instant, as they looked at each other, ignoring the three men struggling in the center of the bridge, there crowded into Breen's mind all the wild, almost unbelievable tales he had heard of One-Two Mac, the fighting little bucko sea-captain, and he believed them.

He saw that the smile was assured, the somber eyes calm, the lean chin firm and square; that the little man's shoulders were broader than they seemed and his arms loose-swinging and unusually long; and that the knuckles of the long hand holding the sextant so steadily were large and criss-crossed by many small scars. This was the man, Brown knew now, with whom he would have to deal in the end; this was the man who he would have to best if he were to carry through the scheme he had devised. And how much depended upon the success of that scheme! His liberty; more—his very life!

Breen spoke, very quietly and deliberately, his gaze steady on Captain Mac's face:

"It looks like the cat's out of the bag, One-Two Mac. He knows who I am—" indicating Tommy Downs—"though I don't know how he found it out. He's right—I'm Ted Breen. I owned and sailed the *Sabine,* and I burnt her to the water, and if it hadn't been for the wind haulin' on me, and me not having a compass, I'd 'ave got clean away. And I kind o' think I'll get away yet. In fact, I'm sure of it. You'll never take Ted Breen into Port-au-Prince!"

He touched his cap with a gesture of mock deference, swung about and went down the ladder; and as he strode aft on the main deck the whistled notes of a hauling chantey floated up to the bridge.

"Why didn't you let me at 'im?" grumbled Tommy. "He couldn't lick me. I'd have beat his head off."

"Don't be too sure of that," warned Captain Mac, thoughtfully adjusting his sextant. "He's a scrapper, that fellow, whatever else he is."

"Y'betcha!" came Mr. Tenny's down-East drawl. "He ain't no gentle little lamb."

"And he didn't get his map chewed up like that in any seminary, either," put in Scott. "He's been around a bit, that bird!"

"What's this about him burning the *Sabine?*" asked Captain Mac.

Tommy quickly told of the message he had read the night before in the wireless room.

"Sparks said he wasn't sure that he had got it straight——"

"He's a useless animal," broke in Mr. Tenny.

"—and that's why it wasn't in the press news this morning. You see now why Breen wants to get put ashore on Watling, don't you? He could hire a native boat to run him over to Cuba or one of the other islands. Then he could ship on some vessel going to South America. He must have money with him. The United States Marines in Port-au-Prince will stick him in the jug until a Department of Justice agent comes down for him. That's about the last place in the world he'd want to go to. Maybe you'd better put him in irons, Cap'n."

"It's not customary to put a man in irons at sea as long as he keeps the peace," said Captain Mac. "However, we'll shackle 'im up as soon as we near port."

"She's on the meridian," warned Mr. Tenny.

The four officers threw up their sextants and "shot" the sun for latitude. Then the captain, the mate and the third mate went to their rooms to work out their observations, while the second mate, on watch, took his sight-book to the wing of the bridge and began figuring on the shelf in the lee of the weather-cloth.

Soon there came three short *buzzes*, the five-minute "stand by" for the noon time signal. Captain Mac, in the chart room, read the chronometer when the final signal sounded, then, a puzzled light in his eyes, he came to the bridge.

"I can't understand it," he said. "That signal agrees with the one we got last night. They make the chronometer eight seconds faster than our figuring does. If those signals are right, then all four of us are wrong, and the ship is about two miles east of where we think she is."

"Will you change the course, sir, to haul her over to the west'ard?" inquired Scott.

"No, not till I'm sure that Sparks isn't making some mistake. I'm afraid of Watling when there's no light on her. It's a lee shore this time of the year, you know; and there are the skeletons of two ships on it now."

THE two time signals that followed—at ten that night and noon the following day—verified the previous ones; the chronometer, if the radio signals were correct, was eight seconds faster than calculated to be.

"I can't understand it," said Captain Mac. "The only explanation is that the standard chronometer has jumped eight seconds. I can hardly believe it, but I can't argue with the United States Hydrographic Office."

"It's that dang wireless man," growled Mr. Tenny.

"He'd hardly make the same slip four times in succession and in the same way."

"S'pose 'e did it on purpose? It'ud be jus' like 'im."

"I think you're talking nonsense," said Captain Mac slowly.

"Nonsense or not, Cap'n, I allus was suspicious o' that feller. Now it's wuss, what with him and that feller Breen allus havin' their heads together. He's sceered half to death o' Breen, anybody can see that. How d'ye know Breen ain't put 'im up to somethin'?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you know Breen said 'e ain't goin' to Port-au-Prince; s'pose 'e'd manage to pile th' ship up on the beach at Watling, now?"

Captain Mac smiled faintly.

"That's worth thinking over," he said; "but the idea didn't escape me. I've been considering it since yesterday, when Breen made his little speech."

"If I was you, Cap'n, I'd shackle 'im up."

"At sea? It would look kind of foolish, wouldn't it?"

He went into his room, leaving old Tenny shaking his head gloomily.

"It would look foolish, too," said Scott, who had been standing near. "The whole Caribean trade would laugh their heads off at it—One-Two Mac, the bucko, so afraid of a lone man that he put him in irons at sea! Why, they'd laugh him out of the trade!"

"I'd rather be laughed at then piled up on a lee shore," retorted Tenny.

"Maybe Breen ain't so bad as you think he is. I don't think he'd go so far as to wreck a ship with over fifty men on board."

"Ye don't? You dang fool! Durn it, didn't the press news that Downs read say he was a murderer? An' ain't he been poisonin' people with dope for years?"

"Ye-es, that's right," agreed Scott, giving in reluctantly.

That afternoon the captain and the three mates shot the sun for longitude. They assumed that the radio signals were correct.

"H'mm," murmured Captain Mac as he received their position slips at four-thirty. "We're all together. We all agree that we're two miles east of where we should be."

"Goin' to haul 'er over to west'ard, sir?" asked old Tenny.

"Yes—one degree. At five o'clock, Mr. Tenny, let 'er go south twelve degrees west instead of eleven."

"South twelve west, sir," repeated Mr. Tenny. "But I don't see why you're haulin' 'er over. You've got plenty o' room to the east'ard."

"I know it, mister," said Captain Mac. "I was thinking of letting Watling go and running down for Bird Rock—but why should I? We've had four time signals and they all agree with one another; why, then, should we go out of our way? If we can't depend on the master clock at Washington——"

He paused, and Scott finished the sentence for him:

"Then we can't depend on anything."

"Exactly!"

"I don't trust that dang wireless man," grumbled Tenny.

"If you know anything about him," said Captain Mac irritably, "I wish you would get it off your chest."

"I don't *know* anything, Cap'n, but—well, here it is: Sometimes ye see 'im an' he ain't got no more life in 'im than a wet swab, looks like 'e's dead 'n' too lazy to close 'is eyes; another time ye see 'im 'n' 'e's like a two-year old, full o' life an' with 'is cheeks red an' 'is eyes poppin' half out of 'is head."

"I've noticed that too," put in Scott.

"So have I, but I never thought anything of it," said Tommy Downs.

Captain Mac lifted his eyebrows inquiringly.

"You mean——"

"I think 'e's full o' hop half the time, that's what I mean!" exploded old Tenny, banging his fist down on the rail.

Downs and Scott gasped. Captain Mac, a thoughtful expression on his face, puffed silently at his cigaret.

"Maybe it would be a good idea if one of us went back and took the signal himself tonight," suggested Scott; "then we'd know the wireless man wasn't putting it over on us."

"Yes," said Tommy, "that would be a good idea."

"Perhaps it would," said Captain Mac slowly. "Mr. Tenny, send word to Coleman that I'll be back at a quarter to ten."

He screwed about on his heel and went quickly into his room.

"Goshamighty!" snorted Tenny. "What the heck's 'e wanta tell 'im first for?"

"That's just Cap'n Mac's way," said Tommy Downs soberly. "He wouldn't kick even a dog when it wasn't looking."

"Hello, Sparks," said Tommy Downs, putting his head in the wireless shack and nodding to the operator. "How do you feel now?"

"Fine, fine!" answered Coleman. "Fine, thanks."

"You look better than you did the other night."

"I feel better, too."

Tommy saw that this was a different Coleman from the one who had sat and shivered and complained of the cold. This one had red cheeks and sparkling eyes and a lively manner, notwithstanding a trace of worry in the slight pucker between his brows and a continual restless movement of his thin white hands.

"Yes, I feel much better now!" he said emphatically, rattling several keys in his pocket.

He inhaled deeply, expanding his scrawny chest, sat up straight in his chair, threw back his narrow shoulders, and smiled.

"That's good," said Tommy; and as he

delivered his message he watched the operator closely. "Cap'n Mac said to tell you he's coming back tonight to take the time tick himself."

"Wha-what?" gasped Coleman.

His shoulders dropped, his chest fell, and he slumped forward with his mouth hanging weakly open and his eyelids flickering.

"What?" he asked again in a tiny, weak voice that could barely be heard above the distant pound and clank of the ship's engine.

"Captain Mac's going to take tonight's time tick himself. He'll be back here fifteen minutes before— Say, what's the matter— you're going all to pieces again!"

"Nothing—nothing. Only—only I don't feel well. I—I feel sick."

He snatched a ring of keys from his pocket and fumbled eagerly with them; then a hopeless expression came to his face and he let them fall from his jumping fingers.

"You had better turn in for a while," advised Tommy, stepping out the door.

"Maybe I will," answered Coleman, his lower lip between his teeth and his thin hands convulsively gripping the arms of the chair. "Maybe I will."

"You'd better," and Tommy went toward the bridge.

The door behind Coleman opened noiselessly, and colorless eyes, set deep above high, swarthy cheek-bones and beneath protruding brows, gazed contemptuously down at the operator, still huddled in his chair.

"Yes, you'd better turn in—for all the use you are, you nitwit! You'd better get on the job and do something, that's what you'd better do! Or—look here—" He took a flat brass key from his pocket and held it an inch from Coleman's nose—"or over the side it goes! Look at it, feel it, smell it, you brainless monkey! And that's all you'll ever do if you don't snap out of your hop and do something!"

He wrenched the key from Coleman's clawing fingers and returned it to his pocket.

"Show some brain work, now, useless, or I'll have you crawlin' around on your knees with your tongue hangin' out a fathom!"

"How did 'e take it?" inquired old Tenny, when Tommy told him that the message was delivered.

"Turned green and pretty near fell off his seat."

"I told ye! I told ye!" and he nodded knowingly.

That night at a quarter to ten Captain Mac and Tenny, the latter carrying the hack chronometer by its strap, entered the wireless shack. The mate placed the instrument carefully on the table and turned his faded old eyes accusingly on Coleman.

"Let us know when you catch the stand by, Coleman," said Captain Mac, producing the "makings" and beginning to roll a cigaret.

"Yes, sir."

Coleman's color had returned and there was a sparkle in his eyes; his expression was one of relief, with a mixture of hope and suspense.

He stopped the wireless motor and adjusted his phones, then he leaned forward in his chair and his thin fingers played with the dials before him. His lower lip was sucked in between his teeth and a nerve in his neck was jumping wildly.

"There's the stand by now, sir," he said after a while. "If you'll put—put on the phones, sir——"

"Thank you," said the captain, and he took the headpiece from the other and slipped it on his head.

"Do you hear it, sir?"

"Yes."

"Is it clear, sir?" A tremulous note in his voice.

"Yes—clearer than I ever heard it before."

"Oh—that's because of the weather, sir. The weather's very good for receiving now, sir. And we're not so very far south yet. It ought to come in good and strong for another day or so yet, if the weather——"

"Shut up!" barked Mr. Tenny.

"Yes," agreed Captain Mac, a curious light in his eye as he watched Coleman's face; "the final stand-by has gone."

Tenny bent over the chronometer; Captain Mac held up his hand and listened attentively.

"Time!" he said sharply.

The mate scribbled the chronometer reading on a pad; multiplied, added and subtracted; then shook his head sourly.

"Well?" asked the captain, putting down the phones.

Tenny grunted something unintelligible, and began to work his problem over.

"How about it?" demanded Captain Mac, impatiently, as the mate jotted down the sum for the second time.

The mate, a disgruntled look on his

weather-beaten face, straightened slowly.

"It agrees wi' the others," he admitted grudgingly.

"You see, sir," said Coleman quickly, "I was very careful. I'm always careful with the time signals, sir. It must be that something happened to the chronometer. I'm sorry that you doubted me—my—that you thought me careless, sir——"

"So am I," interrupted Captain Mac. "I can't doubt any longer, because I heard the signal with my own ears. By the way, what was that noise I heard in the other room?"

"Noise, sir? In the sleeping room? Why—that must have been Brown, sir; he sleeps there. I think he's asleep now, sir."

"Oh, I see," said Captain Mac, and he followed the mate out the door.

"Looks like I was wrong," grumbled Tenny, as they made their way to the bridge.

"Look like it," agreed the captain, smiling thoughtfully.

AT HER regular speed of thirteen and a fraction knots the *Hawk* steamed down the latitudes, and noon the following day found her in latitude 26-56 N. and, if the chronometer were correct, longitude 74-24 W., which position is a hundred and seventy miles north and two miles east of Watling Island.

"At this speed," said Captain Mac, "we'll have Watling a-beam by one o'clock in the morning; but I've decided after all not to take a chance—we'll cut down the speed so that we won't pick up the island till after daybreak. Sunrise is at four-fifty-eight. Mr. Scott, tell the chief engineer to cut 'er down to sixty revolutions—ten knots."

"Ah, ye ain't so sure that everything's all right as ye was, are ye, Cap'n?" said old Tenny as the second mate went to the telephone.

"No," answered the little captain, "I'm not."

He rolled a cigaret, but before lighting it he swept the eastern horizon with his gaze.

"Have you noticed," he asked, "that every ship we've passed yesterday and today has been to the east'ard of us?"

"I have," said Tenny.

"So have I," put in Tommy Downs. "I passed one at eleven o'clock this morning. She was well over to the east'ard."

The captain nodded, and stood silently gazing over the port bow. Two slender masts stood up from the sea rim in the southeast, and from between them a ribbon of black smoke trailed off to the westward.

"She'll pass us to the east'ard too," said Captain Mac, nodding toward the ship coming over the horizon.

He turned suddenly on the old mate, and threatened to impale him with a long forefinger.

"Mr. Tenny, if you wanted to run a ship off her course and put her aground, how would you do it?"

Mr. Tenny was taken aback.

"Sir?" he gulped.

"Come, now, put yourself in Breen's place; with all your years of experience, and all your knowledge of ships and navigation, how would you put this ship aground if you set out to do it? Remember, you're all alone; everybody is against you and watching you."

"I don't know how I'd do it, Cap'n; lemme think."

"How would you do it, Mr. Scott?"

"I'd put a magnet in the compass binnacle," said Scott promptly.

"What! Why the binnacle is full of magnets now. All binnacles have them."

"I know that, sir, but I'd put another one in and—and——"

"And what?"

"And that would give the compass an error——"

"But the compass already has an error. All compasses have errors. And the compass error increases or decreases at every turn of the propeller. You know that."

"Yes, sir, I do. But another magnet would haul 'er around so that——"

"Mr. Scott, you know you're talking rot."

"I guess I am. I spoke too quick."

"Of course you did. Any mate or master who would let himself be fooled by that old chestnut of a magnet stunt isn't fit to be on the bridge. An intelligent 'prentice boy couldn't be fooled with that one. If I thought you meant what you said I'd fire you."

"Yes, sir," said Scott meekly.

"And how would you do it, Mr. Downs?" turning to the third mate.

"Well, I've heard of ships getting in trouble because of fly-specks or ink-spots on the charts. Suppose somebody with a fine pen and a bit of India ink——"

"That idea is just a shade more sensible

than Scott's—just a shade," cut in the captain. "In the first place, I know the charts on this run by heart, fly-specks or no fly-specks; in the second place, *you* don't navigate by chart—do you?"

"No, sir; I do all my work in my sight-book."

"Exactly! And so does Mr. Scott, and Mr. Tenny most of the time, I think. And I use both chart and book. And now, Mr. Tenny, what's your idea?"

"Time!" grunted the old mate. "Time! I'd gum up the time for 'em. I don't know how I'd do it, but if I could make the chronometers faster or slower than they ought to be——"

"Or if you could make the officers *think* the chronometers were faster or slower than they ought to be——"

"Yes, sir! That's it! All th' rest—this binnacle an' chart stuff—is poppycock! I never yet seen the man that could navigate without good time."

"You're right, Mr. Tenny," said Captain Mac, giving the mate an approving nod. "You're right! It's time. You've had that idea all along, and now I'm beginning to agree with you. Those ships passing to the east'ard have started me thinking. Besides, when I heard the time signal last night I also heard something else."

"I knew it! Tell us what ye heard, Cap'n," said Tenny eagerly.

"I'll tell you later. In a little while send word to the wireless man that you want to take the time tick yourself tonight. Don't mention me."

He lighted the cigaret that he had been holding, and leaving a cloud of smoke behind him, went into his room.

"Humph!" snorted Tenny. "He gets us to tell 'im all we know, then he goes off without tellin' us anything."

That evening the sun dropped out of sight in the west and left not a trace of red behind it; nothing but a bank of low-hanging clouds with silver under-linings marked the spot where it had disappeared.

"Overcast tonight, sure as guns," predicted Mr. Tenny.

At a quarter to ten he knocked at the captain's door, put in his head and said—

"I'm goin' back now, Cap'n; do ye want to come along?"

"Oh, no, Mr. Tenny; go right ahead."

Nevertheless, when Tenny had gone Captain Mac came from his room and walked slowly aft. He paused beneath a standing light and glanced at his watch, nodded, and made his way to the wireless shack. Keeping in the shadows, and walking as silently as possible over the cinders on the open deck, he passed around the wireless shack to the other side, and halted before the doorway that opened from the sleeping room upon the deck. The door was closed, and locked—as Captain Mac found by silently trying the knob with careful fingers.

Kneeling, he put his ear to the keyhole.

For a moment nothing; then the softly whistled notes of a hauling chantey—"Blow the Man Down."

Captain Mac smiled; then he took out his watch and tried to read its face, but couldn't in the darkness. He again put his ear to the keyhole, and this time was rewarded with a single word—a single soft, sibilant whisper—from the man alone within—

"Three!"

The captain reached for the door knob, then caught himself and waited. Now the man within was again whistling between his teeth.

Soon there came another word, so low that, had the captain not known what to expect, he would not have made it out—

"Two!"

More low whistling; then, when a minute had passed—

"One!"

The man did not whistle this time; instead, Captain Mac heard tense breathing.

Less than a minute, and—

"Ten!" murmured the man.

Several seconds.

"Five — half — four — half — three — half — two — half — one — half — *Time!*"

The word "Time!" was accompanied by a faint buzzing noise; then—silence.

Captain Mac, almost at a run, circled the house and stepped into the wireless room, startling Coleman so that he dropped his phones to the floor and stared open-mouthed.

"Where's the mate?" demanded the captain in a whisper.

"He—he just went forward, sir."

"Catch him, then, and give him this."

Captain Mac snatched up paper and pencil and, with his back turned to the operator, scribbled two words; then, folding the note, he thrust it into Coleman's hand and propelled him into the darkness.

"Run—find him—and be quick about it! Don't stop an instant! If you do, so help me, I'll——"

But Coleman, nearly blubbering with fright, had gone, scampered off toward the bridge, and Captain Mac could hear the cinders grinding beneath his fear-hurried feet.

Mr. Tenny was in his room when Coleman, wild-eyed, a trickle of blood on his lower lip, stumbled across the threshold.

"Here!" he gasped. "A note—Cap'n Mac—I didn't read it—couldn't stop—I don't know——"

"Give it here!" barked Tenny, jerking the note from the other's quivering fingers. "Drat it! What th' heck're ye croakin' about?"

He put the slip of paper close to his old eyes, and read—

Bring irons.

"I knew it! I knew it!" he cried. "Bring irons!"

He yanked open a drawer of his desk and caught up a pair of handcuffs.

CAPTAIN MAC, after seeing that Coleman did not cross to the other side of the deck to read the note beneath the standing light, re-entered the wireless room, and knocked lightly upon the door that connected the wireless room and the sleeping room.

There came the sound of movement from within, the slam of a door, and the click of a lock tumbler being thrown; then a sharp voice inquired—

"What d'you want?"

"S-sh!" hissed the captain.

For a moment there was strained silence, then—

"Oh—is that you, Coleman?"

"Yes," answered the captain, putting a quaver in his voice. "S-sh!"

He gave the door knob a slight impatient twist.

"Stop shushin' and say what's up, you rabbit," raged Breen; but even as he spoke he was turning the key in the lock.

He flung open the door and stepped back.

"Now, what the——"

He stopped in amazement as Captain Mac thrust through the doorway.

"I thought——"

He paused again, bared his teeth, wrinkled the skin on his nose and closed one eye.

"What's the idea?" he demanded, watching the captain closely.

"The game's fizzled, that's all," answered the captain.

"What d'you mean — fizzled? What game?"

"Your game. It's in the fire. You should learn to control your habits—particularly counting half-seconds aloud. Lots of navigators have that habit."

"O-ho! So that's how it is!"

He stood turning the thing over in his mind, then, a cunning gleam in his eye, he backed to the bunk behind him, shoulder high, and threw one arm carelessly across the pillow.

"Lay off that gun!" cried a voice from behind the captain. "I got a forty-five Colt trained on your gizzard, and if ye so much as move that putty nose of yourn you'll be nothin' but a ring aroun' a hole!"

Mr. Tenny, revolver in one hand and handcuffs in the other, stepped into the room.

"Hold out your hands, Breen," ordered Captain Mac.

Breen hesitated, glanced from the captain to the mate, pursed his lips thoughtfully, then held out his wrist.

"I guess that's that!" he said.

Two sharp clicks, and his wrists were encircled by steel bands and held close together by a short length of chain. Captain Mac took Breen's revolver from beneath the pillow and put it in his pocket. Mr. Tenny, a triumphant expression on his tanned face, shoved Breen before him into the wireless room.

Coleman, his face haggard, stood aside to let them pass.

"Here," said Breen, elbowing Mr. Tenny to a halt, "I think this belongs to you," and he tossed a flat brass key on the table before the operator.

Coleman suppressed a cry, gulped, and caught up the key.

"What's that?" asked Captain Mac quickly.

"No-nothing, sir—nothing but a key."

"I know it's a key, —— it, but to what?"

"Just to the battery box, sir—that's all."

With a pitiful attempt at nonchalance he dropped the key in his pocket.

"How did Breen get it?" inquired the captain, his black eyes searching the operator's face.

"I found it on the floor," cut in Breen.

"Oh, I see. By the way, who has the key to that clothes locker in the sleeping room?"

"I have. In my hip pocket. If you want it, take it out."

The little captain took the key from Breen's pocket and put it in his own.

"Lock him in the after storeroom, Mr. Tenny," he said, motioning Breen to go ahead.

Breen and the mate went down the ladder, and Captain Mac walked toward the bridge. Halfway he stopped, turned and tiptoed back, and halted in the shadow of a ventilator. He saw Coleman come out on deck and look cautiously around, and go to the battery box abaft the wireless shack. The youth bent down, put the key in the lock and turned it, then lifted the lid. He took something out, closed and locked the box, and went hurriedly into the wireless room.

Captain Mac stepped softly to the nearest porthole and looked into the room; and for some time he stood there with an expression of pity upon his lean face.

CAPTAIN MAC came on the bridge at eight bells—midnight.

"How many miles has she logged since noon, Mr. Scott?" he inquired.

"Seventy-four, sir," answered the second mate.

"H'mm—that's eight knots, and we should be making nearly ten. That's by the patent log?"

"Yes, sir. The horizon was hazy at sundown; I couldn't get Polaris for latitude. We're making ten knots by revolutions."

"Yes, I know; but we can't depend on revolutions this trip; the ship's not loaded properly—too much drag. I think we can depend on the log, however; it has never failed us yet. Suppose you call up the engine-room and tell 'em to let her go seventy-two revolutions per minute."

"Seventy-two—very well, sir."

"Now we don't know where we are," said the captain as Scott made the entry in the logbook. "We're probably a mile or so farther to the west'ard than we ought to be, but we can't be sure."

He entered the chart room, then called to the second mate:

"I'll be here on the settee, mister, if you want me. Keep your eyes peeled ahead."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Tenny's weather forecast proved a good one: the sky was heavily overcast; in addition, the northeast breeze had freshened to a strong wind. It was not a storm, nor had the wind come up without warning; for the trade wind, though boisterous at times, is an honest, steady wind and, as a rule, changes its moods in a deliberate and leisurely manner. Before it a solid mass of gray and black clouds moved across the sky, and long, heavy seas pounded upon the *Hawk's* forecastle head with monotonous regularity. It was nothing to worry about, as the ship was in no danger as long as she was under control with plenty of sea room; merely a fresh wind, a heavy sea, and a cloudy sky—a "dirty" night.

Two o'clock dragged around, and Mr. Scott rang for coffee and sandwiches, and whatever else the steward might have left out for him. He ate his lunch under the weather-cloth, then fell to pacing to and fro again, pausing now and then to duck to the lee of the dodger as the rattle of wind-blown spray warned him that an unusually high sea had broken over the quarter.

Three o'clock came, and after what seemed an age to the tired and sleepy second mate, one bell—a quarter to four; and he took the wheel and sent the wheelman to call the mate. Then, when the wheelman returned, he went into the wing of the bridge, threw his arms over the weather-cloth and stood gazing ahead.

It was certainly messy there ahead, thought young Mr. Scott. Never before had he seen such a thick, black, low-lying cloud bank. It lay directly in line with the ship's course and was coming nearer. Perhaps a squall—no, if it were a squall it would not be holding its position so steadily; it would be going off to westward. It looked like— By George, it must be—it was! Now he could see White Cay, and broken water, standing out of the murk.

"Hard a-starboard!" he cried. "Hard down, Malley, hard down—quick!"

Scott ran to the chart room to kick on the door; but he had just drawn back his foot when the door swung over and Captain Mac, his cap on the back of his head and his coat half on, stepped out.

"What d'you see, mister?" he snapped.

"Land ahead, sir. It must be——"

"Watling. Of course! You've got her hard a-starboard? Right. Let her run off

to the east'ard. Let 'er go east-sou'east, when she gets around to it. There's a nasty reef reaches out even this side of White Cay."

"But how did we get this far south, sir?"

"That's it! How did we?"

At that instant the four-to-eight wheelman came up the bridge ladder, and as usual reported the reading of the taffrail log:

"One-three-six and nine-tenths, sir."

"A hundred and thirty-seven miles since noon yesterday!" exclaimed the captain. "And actually we've run about a hundred and sixty-five! We've overrun the log by twenty-eight miles. Has that log been oiled regularly?"

"Yes, sir," answered Scott. "I've oiled it myself every day before coming on watch."

"I'd think nothing of the log underrunning a mile, or even two or three—but twenty-eight!" He turned to the seaman who had reported the reading, "Are you sure of that?"

"Yes, sir," answered the man promptly.

Mr. Tenny came on the bridge as eight bells rang, and took over the watch from Scott.

"Come along aft with me, Mr. Scott," said the captain, "and we'll have a look at that log."

The patent log is a mechanical device that registers the distance—not the speed—that a ship has run through the water. It consists of a "clock" and a rotator, the latter a propeller-like contrivance that is towed through the water, usually from the lee quarter, transmitting its revolutions, by means of a stout cord, to the "clock," which is a series of gears and dials. The *Hawk's* log was a true "taffrail" log; that is, it was towed from the taffrail—the after rail.

"Haul it in," ordered Captain Mac. "Perhaps the rotator is clogged with seaweed."

Scott passed the bight of the log-line through the quarter chock and hauled in hand under hand, Captain Mac standing behind him and coiling the line neatly as he received the slack.

As they worked, the whistled notes of a sea chantey floated from the after storeroom, on the port quarter abaft the after lifeboat; and soon a brown face became framed in one of the port holes. Breen, no trace of sleep in his eyes, calmly watched them as they worked.

Captain Mac knew the drug smuggler was at the port, had heard the whistling and the clink of handcuffs, but he went on with the coiling of the line and did not look up.

The rotator finally came in through the chock, and Mr. Scott held it up.

"No, sir—it's clear," he said.

"Yes," said Captain Mac, straightening.

He did not look at the rotator; instead, he looked calculatingly at the log-line that lay uncoiled on the deck.

"Yes," he repeated. "It's not the rotator; it's the line—it's short."

"Short, sir?"

"Yes; I fathomed it off with my arms as I coiled it down."

He stepped to the clock and looked at where the line was made fast to the ring of the hook.

"The eye has been cut off," he said. "Then the line was shortened, half-hitched, and seized with a bit of marline. A good sailor could have done that in thirty seconds."

"But who— Oh! Do you think——"

"Yes, I do. He must have done it yesterday afternoon. He knew enough to wait till after we took our noon sights for latitude."

Leaving the rotator and line on deck, they started forward. As they came abreast of the face in the port hole Captain Mac stopped abruptly, and faced toward it.

"Two anchors to windward, eh, Breen?" he said. "And neither one of them held. See here?" He pointed a-beam to where White Cay, and behind it Watling Island, stood out against the lightening sky. "That's Watling. Take a good look at it. The next time you see it you'll be bound north, with a Department of Justice agent at your elbow. I'll turn you over to justice if it's the last thing I do on this earth! You'll not escape—make up your mind to that!"

"Aw, go to ——!" said Breen calmly; and pursing his lips, he withdrew his face from the port.

But Breen, for all of his air of nonchalance, was really worried now. His schemes, the schemes that he had had such confidence in, that he had given such earnest thought to, had failed; and here he was, with irons on his wrists, a prisoner.

He could not whistle that fact away. He had done some remarkable things—had caused the navigators of the ship to think they heard something that they did not hear, caused them to think the ship was where she wasn't, to steer for where they did not want to go, and to steam at a speed they did not want to make—but, the fact remained, there were handcuffs on his wrists. With a gloomy shake of his head, he walked to the forward port and looked out.

Dawn had broke, and there was a pink tinge to the eastern sky. The wind was still steady and strong and from the same direction—northeast. He could not see Watling from this port, but he knew the island was now off the starboard quarter, and that the *Hawk* would soon swing to starboard and head south for Crooked Island Passage.

Just forward of the storeroom there was a whaleboat hanging from its davits, and the stern inboard gunwale of the boat was about five feet above Breen's eyes as he looked out the port. Over the gunwale of the boat protruded the end of a boat-hook, and the boat-hook was rattling so from the vibration of the ship that it drew Breen's attention.

"—— thing'll be fallin' out of there and stickin' in somebody's coconut," said Breen; and then, like a streak of light, there flashed into his head an idea. He stood for a moment, his head on one side and one eye closed, whistling softly, considering the thing; then, baring his teeth.

"That's it!" he cried; "—— me, yes, that's the thing'll do the trick yet!"

Quickly he went to the after port, and looked out. On deck, about four feet aft of the storeroom, there was a coil of eight-inch Manila hawser, one of the ship's mooring lines, coiled nearly three feet high on a wooden grating, and lashed securely to ring-bolts in the deck so that waves breaking over would not carry it off. It was a half-coil, sixty fathoms long and weighing over eight hundred pounds. Breen grinned as he looked at it.

The storeroom in which Breen was confined was one used for deck stores. It was crowded with shackles, eye-bolts, ring-bolts, cargo-hooks; swabs, scrubbers, empty paint pots; marline spikes, fids and coils of small line. Breen rummaged about in a box till he found a rusty spoke-shave, nodded, and bringing the spoke-shave sharply down upon the edge of the box, broke it in two. The edge of the spoke-shave was not sharp, but it was rough, just the thing for cutting rope; better, in fact, than a knife with a razor edge would have been. Discarding one half, he took the other to a coil of fifteen-thread line and cut off several fathoms. At one end of the line he made a running bowline, and with the quickly fashioned lasso in his hand, went to the forward port, beneath the whaleboat.

The after decks were clear, though Breen could see Mr. Tenny standing on the bridge and looking ahead. He put out one arm, with the running noose, as far as the chain between his wrists would allow him, and held the rest of the line coiled lightly in his other hand. He swung the noose and cast it upward, toward the boat-hook; but missed, and hauled it in. Four times he missed, but at the fifth attempt the noose settled over the metal end of the boat-hook. He flipped it down, jerked it taut, then, after a cautious look about the decks, jerked the hook out of the boat. It fell with a clatter to the deck, but an instant later had disappeared through the port-hole.

With a fathom of marline he bound the half of the spoke-shave to the metal end of the boat-hook, making what resembled an enormous pruning knife. This he put out the after port, hooked it under a part of the small line that held the hawser to the deck, and pulled. The rough edge of the spoke-shave cut the lashing so easily that he almost went over backward. He did likewise to another part, and another, cutting around the big coil until it was free of lashing; then he took in the boat-hook and knocked off the spoke-shave.

Now he went to each of the ports in turn, put out his head and searched the sea for a ship or ships that might come to the *Hawk's* assistance. There was no ship in sight, though there was a smudge of smoke on the northern horizon. This he studied for a moment, then, with a shake of his head, muttered that it could not be helped, and that he would have to take the chance, and returned to the after port. Watling Island and the reef that skirted it, he saw, were now straight down the wind from the *Hawk;* and he saw by the ship's wake that she was now making the turn that would

put her on the course for Bird Rock and Crooked Island Passage, seventy-five miles to the southward. The ship, now, was in the very position he wanted her, and the swinging motion of her stern made the success of his plan all the more certain. This time, he told himself, he could not fail.

Again he put out his boat-hook, and jammed the sharp metal point between the strands of the 8-inch hawser; then, using the long wooden shaft of the hook as a lever, and the lower edge of the port-hole as a fulcrum, he raised the bight of line and shoved it to the rail, between the bars, and over the side. Jamming the point in again farther back, he shoved some more of the hawser over the side. This he did several times, until the hawser began to run out of its own weight, then he drew in his boat-hook and, smiling grimly, stood calmly watching.

Faster and faster went the line. Paint chips flew from the rail; smoke began to rise from where the rough hawser was chafing over the wooden grating; Manila shreds, torn from the line, began to collect in the waterway.

"Two anchors to windward, huh?" mused Breen. "And both dragged? Well, let's see what anchor number three will do."

He tossed the boat-hook through the port and far over the rail, went to an upturned bucket and sat upon it; then, his head on one side and one eye closed, he fell to whistling tunelessly.

CAPTAIN MAC and the second mate, after their inspection of the log, returned to the bridge, and the latter told Mr. Tenny of their narrow escape from going on the reef and of how Breen had tricked them by shortening the log-line, causing the log to register less than the actual distance run.

"He took a chance," he concluded. "Had a squall or rain come along and cut down the visibility for half an hour we would have piled up sure. It's a wonder we didn't as it was."

"Oh, he's a wise one, that Breen," said Tenny. "He's a good navigator, I guess, and he's been pullin' dirty tricks so long that 'is head's just runnin' over with 'em. He's dumb-lookin', and walks around like 'e don't know anything a-tall, but all th' time he's snatching schemes out of the air like a sleepy ole turtle snatchin' flies."

He gave an order to the wheelman, and the ship began to come round on the course to Bird Rock.

Now the sky in the east was red. The cloud-shapes formed a ladder with rungs of fire, and up that ladder climbed the sun, a ball of molten copper. It was day.

"It's going to be a hot day," remarked Scott.

" 'Red sky in the morning, sailors take warning,' " quoted Mr. Tenny. "Maybe nothin' more'n heat and a squall or two, though. This is the season for 'em."

"Anyway, we've one thing less to worry about: we'll not have to worry about what Breen's going to do next."

"No, an' durn glad I am we ain't——"

There came a sudden grinding noise from below, the hiss of steam; for some seconds the ship shook from stem to stern; then, as the engine stopped, there was silence, and all vibration ceased.

The two mates stared at each other with startled, questioning eyes; then Mr. Tenny recovered and sprang to the engine-room voice tube.

"What's wrong down there?" he cried.

"Yeh—that's what I want to know!" came sharply back.

Captain Mac came from his room, and shouted to the mate:

"Keep 'er up to the wind, mister! Get as far off shore as you can before she loses way."

The *Hawk*, her engine stopped, answered her helm and swung slowly up into the wind; then, as she lost momentum, began to fall off, and kept on around until the wind was quartering. The wind, blowing strongly, gave her a slight list, and an almost imperceptible swirl of water along the weather waterline showed that she was making leeway—toward Watling Island and the reef!

"How long ye goin' to be fixin' 'er up?" shouted Mr. Tenny down the voice tube after a while.

"Don't know," came the answer. "Won't know till we find what's wrong."

"—— all engineers to —— anyway!" grunted Tenny, returning to the wing of the bridge and looking anxiously at the white water breaking over the line of reefs to leeward.

An engineer came out of the engine-room fidley, cast an angry glance up at the bridge and walked aft on the main deck. A few

minutes later he returned, and shouted to Mr. Tenny—

"There ain't anything wrong below, mister mate: there's about a million fathom of dock line about your —— propeller!"

"Holy sailor!" exclaimed Tenny. "Now how—what——"

But Captain Mac, with Scott at his heels, leaped down the ladder to the main deck and ran aft. The captain swung over the taffrail and looked under the counter.

"He's right," he said grimly. "An eight-inch line. Some of it's around the propeller and the rest is hanging in bights. It's a wonder it didn't twist the wheel off the shaft."

Scott, who had paused to look at the grating where the line had been, cried out in surprize.

"Look here, Cap'n; the lashing's been cut! It was new lashing, and it's been cut with a knife!"

They returned to the bridge, and the captain's face was grim as he went over the situation with his mates.

"We're in a bad way," he said. "The ship isn't under control and we're off a lee shore. There's a stiff breeze blowing us straight for Hinchinbroke Rocks, and a knot and a half or two knot current setting us in the same direction. We're making at least three knots leeway, and we're about four miles to windward of the rocks. We have an hour and a quarter to do whatever we are going to do.

"But who do you suppose—" began Scott.

"It was that durn wireless operator, that's who," cut in Tenny.

"Never mind," interrupted the captain. "We haven't time to discuss that. Mr. Scott, tell the chief engineer to pump out his after tanks and fill the forepeak and number one tanks, port and starboard. We want to trim her by the head, so that the stern will lift and bring the propeller as far out of the water as possible. Tell him to let everything else go and start his pumps."

"Yes, sir," and Scott went below.

"You, Mr. Tenny, take all the deck force and stop off the starboard anchor in the hawse pipe; then unshackle the chain and bring the end on deck. Lower away on the port anchor till you have the bitter end, then shackle the starboard chain to it, lower away again and let it drag. One anchor with a double length of chain will hold fifty per cent, better than two anchors with ordinary lengths of chain. You've got plenty of time, as there is over two thousand fathoms of water under us now, and we won't be over holding ground for some time. The anchor may fetch us up and it may not; if it don't we'll probably pile neatly up on Hinchinbroke Rocks."

"Why not try a sea anchor, Cap'n?" suggested Tommy Downs.

"Because it wouldn't do any good," said the captain shortly. "Sea anchors only work on paper. You, Mr. Downs, get some men from the steward and have them bring on deck all the fish oil we have in the storeroom. We'll pour it over both sides to give us a slick when we begin to clear the propeller. As soon as you have the oil on deck take your men aft and rig a stage under the counter."

The whole thing rested upon whether the chief engineer could empty the after trimming tanks and fill the forward ones in time to allow the deck force to clear the propeller of rope before the ship grounded. The chief was doubtful.

"Maybe," he said. "And maybe not! I don't know."

"And maybe we'll all be flounderin' around in the surf in another hour," growled Mr. Tenny.

They were standing by the taffrail, the chief engineer, Tenny, and Captain Mac. The ship was perceptibly down by the head, but the stern had not lifted enough for men to go under the counter and begin chopping away the hawser. The port anchor, at the end of a hundred and fifty fathoms of chain, hung from the port hawse pipe, but had not yet begun to drag, and the *Hawk* still lay with her quarter to the wind.

Beneath the counter the heavy seas raged fiercely, making it impossible to clear the propeller even if the stern were high enough. The ship lay in the natural position of a vessel not under control; the anchor would first have to touch bottom and drag, if it did not hold, before the stern would swing to leeward. And each minute saw the ship closer to Hinchinbroke Rocks, gleaming wickedly beneath the morning sun.

Breen, locked securely in the storeroom, could be heard whistling merrily.

"—— wrecker!" grunted Tenny. "Been a good thing 'f we'd 'a' run 'im down when we first seen 'im."

He saw the wireless man coming from forward, and shouted to him:

"Hey, you, come 'ere!" And then, to Captain Mac: "Here he is, Cap'n! He did it! I know durn well he cut that lashin' and run the hawser over the stern! Y'ought to lock 'im up."

"I didn't!" protested Coleman. "I didn't! You old fool, I tell you I didn't!"

There was a wild, desperate gleam in his eyes, and his weak mouth was quivering with fear and helpless anger. Over and over he protested his innocence.

"I didn't throw over the rope. Why don't you leave me alone? I never did anything to you. You've been hounding me ever since I came to this ship. I don't want to be hounded! First you, and then Breen, and then the captain and the mates. I needed help, but I never got it. You didn't help me. The captain didn't help me. Nobody helped me! Everybody's against me! How can a man do what's right when everybody is against him? Tell me that, you—you old fool! And I tell you I didn't throw your rope over. I didn't! I faked the time signal, yes, because I had to—*had* to, d'you hear?—but I didn't throw over that rope!"

"You did, too," insisted Tenny. "You been no good ever since you come aboard, and you on'y needed somebody with more brains than you to put ye up to things. Ye ain't never done anything but sneaky, mean things since ye been aboard."

"I haven't? I haven't? How do you know I haven't? Maybe I did something good just a little while ago. You don't know everything!"

"What did you do, son?" asked Captain Mac, holding up a hand to the wrathful Tenny. "What was it?"

"I'm not telling. You wouldn't believe me. But I did something good all right. You're all the same; you all think I'm no good; but I'm just—just sick! Sick—that's all. I never knew a man could be so sick and miserable as I am!"

He gulped, and bit hard on his lower lip; then, his unbuttoned coat flapping in the wind, he shuffled off.

"Y'oughta lock 'im up, Cap'n," said Tenny.

"No; let him be," said the little captain, with a slow shake of his head. "He's right about one thing—he's a sick man."

"Hey, One-Two Mac!" called Breen, his face in a port. "How about me? This tub's goin' to hit in a little while, and she's liable to break up or go over on one side; you ain't goin' to leave me locked in here with my hands chained together, are you? How 'bout it—goin' to let me out?"

Before Captain Mac could answer, there came a hail from the bridge:

"There's a ship over there, Cap'n! She's headed this way!"

Tommy Downs stood pointing to the north; and turning together, the three men below saw a white ship low on the horizon.

"What's it look like, Mr. Downs?" asked the captain.

"Either a fruit boat or a coast guard cutter, sir. Maybe it's one the wireless man picked up with his SOS."

"Like ——!" snapped Tenny. "He ain't been sendin' out no SOS."

Captain Mac gauged with his eye the distance between the ship and the *Hawk* and between the *Hawk* and the reef.

"It'll be an hour before she can give us a line," he said thoughtfully. "No one can say how long it will be before we're on that rock!"

The boatswain came from forward and reported that the anchor had struck bottom; and the captain and the mate went to the forecastle-head.

The warm trade wind had strengthened to a moderate gale, and the *Hawk*, her decks streaming water, was rolling heavily in a broken sea. Each wave-thrust added its power to wind and current and increased the freighter's speed toward the waiting rocks; now they could hear the snarl and roar of the combers among the jagged peaks.

They felt a slight jar, and another, and then a series of them; they looked over the bow and saw that the anchor chain was beginning to lead to windward. Soon the stern began to swing to leeward, slowly at first, but faster as the ship got into shallower water and the anchor dug deeper into the sand of the bottom, the anchor chain getting a better lead. But at short intervals, as the ship straightened out, there came muffled rumbles as the anchor lost its hold of the sandy bottom and slid; then the chain would sag and the ship wallow to leeward until the anchor got another grip.

"Take your men aft, Mr. Tenny," said Captain Mac, "and have them stand by to go over the stern with their axes as soon as they can."

The white ship was coming for them with

a broad pennant of black smoke at her funnel and a surge of water at her stem.

"Forced draft," remarked Captain Mac. "She's not rambling toward us by chance."

Again the chain stretched taut, and again it rumbled as the anchor slipped and the *Hawk* wallowed to leeward.

The second mate looked fearfully down the wind, and growled in his throat as he saw the nearness of the gleaming rocks.

"Bosun," called the captain, "where is that big squarehead seaman of yours—Larken?"

" 'E's aft, sir; I'll get 'im for yer!"

Leaving Scott to watch the anchor chain, the captain and the boatswain went aft, where they found Larken, the big seaman.

"What d'you say there, One-Two Mac?" called Breen as they approached the storeroom. "Goin' to let me out? Or are you goin' to drown me like a cat in a bag? Come on—give us a chance to kick out with the rest!"

"Mr. Tenny—have you the key to the storeroom?" asked the little captain.

"Yes, sir."

"Open the door, then."

Tenny, protesting, opened the door; and Breen, a faint smile on his face, stepped nonchalantly to the deck.

"Kind o' looks bad, don't she, Cap'n?" he remarked, nodding toward the rocks. "Looks like we ain't goin' to Port-au-Prince after all."

He closed one eye and gazed at Captain Mac with an expression of grim gloating on his face. But his expression became tinged with anxiety as he turned and took in the white ship foaming toward them from the north. With his feet wide spread and his body swaying to the roll of the ship, he stood gazing with speculating eyes at the approaching vessel; then, suddenly he started, his eyes blazed and his nose twitched with surprize and anger.

"Forty-seven kinds of ——!" he exclaimed. "Why, that's—that's——"

His mouth snapped shut like a sprung trap; and when he turned to the captain, and held out his wrists, he had assumed an indifferent air and there was nothing but the wrinkling of his nose to betray his emotion.

"Well, come on, One-Two Mac," he said; "you was goin' to take the cuffs off, wasn't you?"

"Not exactly," answered Captain Mac, lifting one side of his mouth in a thin smile. "I'll take one off now and the other off when we hit. And when you leave the ship I'll put them both on again!"

"Like —— you will!"

"You'll see. I saw you look at that ship—I suppose you recognize her?"

"Huh? No—I don't. Fruit boat, eh?"

"You know better than that. You know —— well it's the *Binghampton*, and that she's coming for you!"

Breen glanced shoreward.

"She won't get me, though!" he said firmly.

Captain Mac unlocked the handcuff from Breen's right wrist, and beckoned to Larken, the big seaman.

"Keep hold of this fellow, Larken," he said. "Don't let him go unless I tell you to. And watch him—he's slippery."

"Ay, sir, I'll watch 'im," answered Larken confidently, and he took firm hold of the chain with one huge hand.

THE *Hawk's* propeller was clear of the water now, and the boatswain and two men, each armed with a sharp ax, had slipped to the stage rigged under the counter and were chopping frantically at the snarled hawser. Oil floated aft from where Tommy Downs and his men were pouring it over the side, and the long swells rolled under it like under a blanket, without breaking.

"A 'alf-hour more, sir," called the boatswain, and he grunted as the edge of his ax bit into the tough Manila.

"A half-hour!" groaned Tenny. "Ye dang hammerhead, we'll be on the rocks in half an hour!"

"Doin' the best we can," replied the boatswain.

"By ——!" exclaimed Captain Mac; "I think that cutter will reach us in time! Here, son—" to a young seaman—"run for'rd and tell the second mate to have a line ready to run out to that ship when she gets close enough to take it."

The *Hawk* was still setting to leeward, but slower and slower as the chain cable got a better lead and the anchor dug deeper into the bottom. But the rocks were close!

"How much longer are you going to be, bosun?" asked the captain, putting his head over the rail.

"About ten minutes, sir; it's comin' easier than I thort it would."

Captain Mac turned to the mate.

"Mr. Tenny, stand by the engine-room door, and when I give you the word, sing

out to the chief to go full ahead. Maybe we'll not need the cutter."

He stood bracing himself by the rail, one side of his mouth slightly lifted in a grimace, and his hands clenched so tightly that the knuckles showed white.

Breen, standing beside Larken, glanced at the little captain, then at the *Binghampton*, but a quarter of a mile to the northward; then he looked overside and studied the long, slick swells running toward the shore. His eye brightened and he softly whistled a note or two of a chantey as he figured his chances. It looked easy. He was a good swimmer and would be able to cover the short distance between the *Hawk* and the shore long before a boat could be got over the side. Wind and current would be with him and the oil slick would prevent the seas breaking over his head. Of course the handcuffs were still attached to one wrist, but——

"I'll be —— if I'll let one bracelet stop me from gettin' away!" he said to himself.

Still whistling softly, he flashed a look at Larken out of the corner of his eye. The big seaman, the chain gripped tightly in one hand, was watching the approaching vessel. Breen made as if to scratch his head, and awkwardly shoved his cap so far to one side that it fell to the deck and rolled toward the waterway.

"All clear, sir!" cried the boatswain at that instant, and he and his men came clambering up the stagelines to the deck.

There came a tremendous jar and a muffled grating sound from beneath them, and the old freighter's worn plates groaned with the strain.

"She's struck!" cried Captain Mac. "Come on, men; get aboard. We'll go ahead—the propeller's half in the water. Come on—swing your stage out of the way! Hurry—hurry!"

Breen, with Larken following, started suddenly for his cap, and as he reached for it he slipped on the wet deck and fell heavily to one knee; and the seaman was forced to lean over to keep hold of the chain. Breen straightened like a flash, and his right fist swung upward in a short arc and landed with a sharp crack on Larken's jaw. The big man fell forward on his face, releasing the chain, and rolled over till he brought up in the waterway.

"Grab hold of him!" shouted Captain Mac, leaping toward them.

But Larken, floundering in the waterway, was temporarily partly blind, and was trying vainly to make something of the vague shadows flitting before his eyes.

Breen had sprung to the rail; he steadied himself, and jumped—but as he left the rail a slender form shot after him, collided with him in mid-air, and turned over and over with him as he fell. Together they plunged into the water and disappeared; but a second later came to the surface, and a clear voice shouted—

"Full ahead!"

The order carried to Mr. Tenny, waiting by the open engine-room door, and he repeated it:

"Full ahead!"

The *Hawk's* propeller thrashed; the blades, as they swung beneath the shaft, plunged into the water and sent a swirl of foaming wash toward the shore—and in that wash were two men, handcuffed one to the other, and fighting fiercely.

"Well, strike me a blushin' pink!" exclaimed the boatswain. "Did you see that! Cap'n Mac snapped one o' the handcuffs on 'imself while they was in the bloomin' air!"

"And now look at 'im!" said another. "That crooked-nose guy is just naturally gettin' his pan hammered in! Wow! In the kisser! Another one! Wowee! What a beezer 'at guy'll have when the Old Man gets through with 'im! Smack—smack! Sock it to 'im, Cap'n, sock it to 'im! Hit 'im again—ah, the big mutt's gone and quit! He don't want any more."

Slowly, very, very slowly, the *Hawk* was going ahead; and from forward came the clank of the anchor engine as the second mate began to take in the chain. The *Binghampton* swung into the wind and put over a boat; and the boat came tossing over the sea toward the spot where the two men were treading water in the oily slick between the *Hawk* and Hinchinbroke Rocks.

THE *Binghampton's* boat, after picking up Captain Mac and Breen, went alongside the *Hawk*, and Murdock, the young officer in charge, went aboard with the captain to get information for his report to his commander.

"I don't understand it, Captain," said Murdock, sitting on the settee in the captain's room. "It's a queer deal all around, seems to me. Why did you refuse to answer our wireless calls, and force us to chase you

a thousand miles? We knew you had Ted Breen aboard because the master of the *Thomas Ames*, through his telescope, saw you pick him up."

"*Thomas Ames?* Big gray freighter?" asked Captain Mac, pulling dry clothes from a drawer beneath his berth.

"Yes. And why did your operator, after refusing to answer us for three days, suddenly change his mind and call us this morning?"

"He called you?" said the captain, surprized.

"Yes. Told us that you had Breen aboard and that we could have him if we came in a hurry. Who is this operator, anyway?"

"His name is Coleman. He and I had a little talk this morning just before we got the line snarled in the propeller. He used to be wireless man on Breen's yacht; and it was Breen who made him what he is."

"What he is? What is he?"

"He has the cocaine habit. Breen started Coleman using it aboard the *Sabine*. Breen don't use it himself—too wise. Through some influential friends ashore, Breen got Coleman into the company that owns this ship. Coleman told me the arrangement. He was to buy narcotics in Colon and drop the stuff, in waterproof tins, overboard off Navesink, and the *Sabine* was to wait there and pick it up. In that way Breen would avoid being checked up as a buyer of narcotics at the other end. He has men on at least four ships, Coleman told me, bringing the stuff up from Central America for him. It can be bought any number of places in Colon and Panama City, you know. But Coleman, it seems, isn't as bad as Breen thought he was. When he was placed aboard the *Hawk* he refused to carry narcotics. Said he didn't want to make anybody else like he was. He defied Breen.

"However, when Breen came aboard here, when we picked him up by chance, he had no trouble getting control of Coleman again. Coleman was still using cocaine, of course, and he kept it locked in the battery box abaft the shack. All Breen had to do was to take the key away from him and threaten to throw it over the side if he didn't do as he was told. Coleman was merely a poor sick boy with no one to turn to. He was afraid to come to me. He had to do what Breen told him to. The idea of faking our time signals was Breen's."

"Faking your time signals? Tell me about it."

Captain Mac, as he changed his clothes, told Murdock of how Breen and Coleman had been the cause of their nearly going on the reef to the northward of Watling Island.

"Breen was in the sleeping room," he finished, "and he had a buzzer connected by a wire to the lead that runs down from the aerial. It was wireless wire tapping. He had compared his watch with the chronometer beforehand, and all he had to do was sit there and give us the signal as if it were coming from Arlington. He's an experienced navigator, you know, and he knew just what time to give us to throw us to the west'rd of the ship track. But he made one mistake. You know that nine out of ten navigators have the habit of counting aloud when they count half-seconds from a chronometer. Well, that's what Breen did. Not very loud you know, barely above his breath; but he had his head in the locker where he kept the buzzer, and the buzzer was in his hand, and it was connected by a series of wires, running through the radio apparatus, to the phones on my head.

"Did you ever see those toy telephones the children have? They are nothing but a length of waxed string with an imitation transmitter at each end, and you can talk from room to room with them, the sound traveling over the string. Well, that's how the buzzer wire worked. His voice in that partly closed closet started vibrations, and the vibrations traveled along the wire to my head. I heard it quite plainly, but at the time I thought it was the mate, Mr. Tenny, who was bending over the hack chronometer by my side. So I thought nothing of it. But just as we left I heard some one moving about in the sleeping room. Coleman said it was Breen. Later I began to think about it, and it seemed to me that I had heard the ticking of a watch in addition to the counting. That was what made me decide to look into it further. And the next time I caught him in the act."

"Well, well! This Coleman, then, is as bad as Breen. I suppose you're going to turn him over to the authorities as soon as you get in?'

"No-o," said Captain Mac slowly, "I'm not."

"No! You're not? What then?"

An embarrassed look came to the little man's face; and he seemed very interested

in the shoe he was lacing as he told Murdock what he intended doing with Coleman.

"Perhaps you're right," said the young officer when the captain finished. "Perhaps. It's pretty decent of you, I'll say, and I give you credit; but, Captain, what about my report? What am I to say to my captain? He has a report to make out himself, you know. And there are technicalities that stand in the way——"

"Is your captain an old man?" asked Captain Mac.

"Oh, yes; he's an old seaman and clambered in through the hause pipe, as they say."

"Well, you tell him that another seaman who clambered in through the hause pipe asks a favor. Ask him to let technicalities slide and forget everything but that the *Hawk's* wireless operator was sick and couldn't tend his apparatus properly. You've got your man, and that's the main thing after all. Try to talk your captain around to seeing it the way we do, eh?"

"I'll try," said Murdock, getting up to leave. "And maybe I'll not have much trouble. Our Old Man is a pretty decent sort himself."

He smiled at the little shipmaster, swung about and went out the door.

"Say, mister," said Mr. Tenny, who had been hovering about the door of the captain's room. "What's 'e goin' to do with that Coleman?'"

"He's going to send him to the Balboa Hospital," answered Murdock, pausing. "To be treated as a drug addict. And he says he's going to pay his way so that he'll get the best of treatment."

"Captain Mac said that?" exclaimed Tenny, amazed. "He must be crazy!"

"Yes, some of these tough sea-captains are queer articles," agreed the officer; and he went down the ladder.

Tommy Downs leaned over the rail in the wing of the bridge as the boat pulled away, and called down to Breen, under guard in the stern sheet,

"Hey, old timer, you were right about one thing."

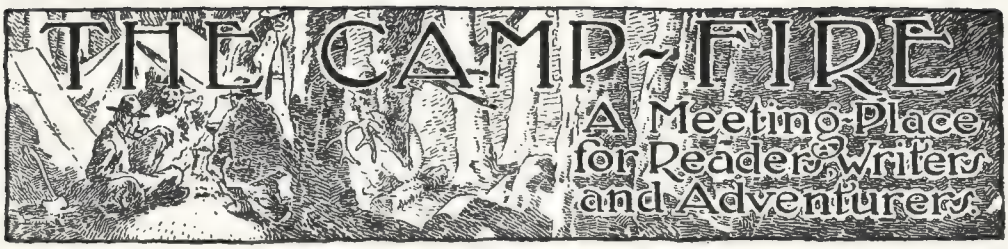
"Yeah?" said Breen, looking up and cocking one eye at him.

"Yeh. You're not going to Port-au-Prince!"

"Go to ——!" growled Breen.

"So long, old timer. I guess it'll be a long while before I see you again!"

But Breen, his nose, now farther askew than ever, twitching like a cat's, was scowling at the *Binghampton*, waiting a half-mile to windward.



Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

HERE'S a letter from an old-timer comrade who knew Wild Bill, Buffalo Bill, the Norths and others well known to Western history and who played a part in it himself. These old pioneers have an extra friendly welcome at our Camp-Fire.

Cañon, Arizona.

Just reading *Adventure*, July 10, 1923, and letter from J. D. Moore. I agree in almost all he says about Bill Cody, Buffalo Bill, as I was well acquainted with him at McPherson and was headquarters courier for Gen. Crook in '76 when Bill made his trip to the expedition.

KNEW Wild Bill when marshal of Abilene, Kan. Was at Elsworth when Bill killed Phil Coe in front of the old saloon in Abilene. Last saw Wild Bill in Cheyenne in '74 on his way to Black Hills. I never knew Wild Bill to be in Nebraska.

I first met the North boys when they brought the Pawnees to the expedition on Powder River about mid-November and we were together in the Powder River fight on November 25, '76.

As to Bison William—he was never chief of scouts or an officer in the army. Last year I received a private letter from Uncle F. Huston. I would like to know if Mr. James Moore is related to Tom Moore who was chief packer on the campaign of '75-76.

With an apology to Mr. Moore, I am—BOB HECKLE (Texas Bob).

P. S.—Another of whom Mr. Moore speaks and with whom I was well acquainted was California Joe. Was with him a few days before he was killed by a half-breed, Louie Richau, who died here a few years ago.

IN BERTON BRALEY'S long narrative poem in this issue one of the songs, "The Drums," is only a slightly changed version of the poem of the same name that was published in our issue of December 20, 1921. Mr. Braley was willing to write another in its place but we agreed with him that it fitted too perfectly here and should be left in.

"Tales of the Hot-Dog Tavern" is, of course, an unusual stunt for *Adventure*, unusual from several points of view. Our magazine doesn't belong in the "try-anything-once" class, but it does like to shake itself up once in a while, try an experiment here and there, go adventuring a bit on its own hook. Surely if any magazine is entitled to an adventure, ours is. And

this very long poem looked like an interesting adventure.

IT WAS February, 1923, when this comrade wrote us from hospital. I wonder in what part of the world he is by this time.

Fort Meyer, Virginia.

I am at present a soldier at Fort Meyer, Virginia, and am in the hospital with an infected hand, but have been in a few places in this little world of ours.

I SERVED in the Canadian Army in 1914 and when war was declared I had to stay in. Went to France and was discharged in 1916 with a punctured lung, but it got pretty well and I managed to get in the American army in 1917. Went overseas with the boys from Chicago and came back in pretty good condition in 1919. Then my lung started to bother me once more and the doctor told me to take a sea trip, so I worked my way to the British West Indies. Went to British Guiana where I heard a lot about diamonds, but thought it all talk. Am sorry now I did not stay there. Came home to Montreal (that is my home) and went to New Hampshire and worked in the woods as clerk.

After working there for a while I made up my mind that I was sick of the place, so I went to Boston and while there enlisted for Panama with the Twelfth Cavalry and while out on maneuvers was detailed to find an inland lake called Ponte Gatun, named after Lake Gatun. We traveled quite a distance on horesback and we came to places where we had to lead our horses—the trail was so narrow the horses had to be unsaddled in order to get through. We came within four hours of the lake and we could not go any farther on horseback, so we left two men in charge and went afoot. After we had made a map of the country around the lake and the trail, we went back to our camp, left Panama for U. S. September 21, 1921, and have been here ever since.

Am itching to be on the move again. Have only six more months to do, then I am going somewhere. I do not know where yet, but I won't stay in the States long after I get dischraged.

Well, I must close now, as I have to put a dressing on my arm.—A. H. BRENTLEY.

IN ACCORDANCE with our custom of mentioning new books by members of our writers' brigade, if the story appeared originally in *Adventure* or connects with our general field of interest, here is the news that "The Major—Diamond Buyer," by L. Patrick Greene is just about now being put on sale by Doubleday, Page & Co. at $2.00. Most of you know the *Major*, for he made his first printed appearance in our pages and parts of some of those stories have been woven into the book about him.

For nearly three years Mr. Greene has been a member of our staff, but, to our real regret, has resigned to give more of his time to writing. The only good thing about it for the rest of us is that *Adventure* is now free to buy stories from him. There is an office rule that our magazine shall not buy stories from any one on its own editorial staff—a wise rule on the whole, but particularly hard when the man in question, as in this case, was a contributor before he became one of the staff.

APROPOS of his story, "The Three Missing Men," in this issue, Alan LeMay introduces us to several more:

Perhaps some of you folks whose trails have not led southward might like to meet up with a few more of the "missing men" that I have run into in the tropics. I'll have to disguise them a little, of course—you can see why. But here goes:

BOYS, meet Dick O'Grady—I'll vouch for him. He's been in the tropics twenty-seven years, and his hair is a little gray. When you and I have seen what he's seen, our hair will be white. He sometimes speaks fondly of the old days in Oklahoma, where he was a cowhand. He's been through seven political revolutions in the tropics. When I last saw him he spoke hopefully of getting up another. He is marked with the scars of eleven bullet-wounds—any two of which would have caused an ordinary man to be patted in the face with a spade. He owes me seventy-two dollars. He'll pay it.

Friends, shake hands with —— ——. He distinguished himself at a bull-fight in Cartagena by getting down from the bleachers in street clothes to kill a "cross-eyed" bull that had got the better of the local talent. Don —— wishes he were still in Spain. He is not, however, planning to go back there. The señor has been mauled by bulls only twice in his career in the ring. His scars indicate that twice is enough. Don't mention revolutions to him. He isn't interested in them. I learned my best Spanish cuss-words when I asked him if he had ever engaged in one. He owes me five dollars, American gold. I am not watching the mails.

HANDS on your pocketbooks, folks. The watery specimen I am now presenting calls himself ——— ——. Occasionally he will also answer to the name of ——. He seems to have had some experience in the peace-time navy, but is taciturn about it. He is at once the hungriest and the most helpless man I ever met. He is also a low life, and I hope he sees this. I gave him the eight cans of beans, and I don't mind his taking those two flannel shirts, but why did he make off with my Stetson hat? He left for the interior when some joker told him that the battleship *Oregon* was in the harbor. I owe him a poke in the eye.

Gentlemen (try to look cultivated, boys)—allow me to present Dr. ——, from parts unknown. He seems to have lived in every country in South America for at least ten years each. I compute that, if his stories are all true, he must be at least two hundred years old. A genial, cultured fellow, an excellent linguist, and a judge of fighting cocks, he was well liked at the Club Americano. I owe him my gratitude. I was the only white man he did *not* owe at the time he packed his trunks with everything that wasn't nailed down and quietly departed on the night boat.

BOYS, mitt my friend Cap. Cap what? Shut up. He is the toughest looking sailor I ever saw in my life. One eye, broken nose, two teeth out—a face that horses turn around to stare at in dumb astonishment. He looks so hard that a short-handed skipper of a tramp vessel once turned him down on his looks—and believe me, that's *some* tough. While I knew him he had one obsession—he wanted to get on a boat that was going "strickly sout'." He became a rather pathetic figure after he went broke. I have seen him weep childish tears into his beer, as day after day he doggedly passed up the northbound ships. I hope he is doing well. But, if I never see him again, that will be soon enough. He has a way of getting "proper shirty" after about the fourth rum.

Who are these men that can't go home? What are they wanted for? Where are they from? With the curious tact of the tropics, all refrain from asking them; and one never knows. Like the three missing men that my yarn is about, they are just homeless men; outcasts one runs into in the tropics, and never sees again.—ALAN LEMAY.

CAMP-FIRE'S thanks should go to the comrade who sent the following brief note with a newspaper clipping concerning the discovery of an alleged white race hidden in Central America.

The last 2c I have, but I spend it to send this to *Adventure*. Pay day Friday.

He gave his name but no address other than a Philadelphia postmark, so I was unable to thank him by letter. Perhaps he witheld it and mentioned the coming pay day to make sure his communication could not possibly be interpreted as the wail and indirect plea of a hard-up with an eye to every chance. Well, there were no such suspicions—only a very real appreciation of his loyalty to his Camp-Fire comrades.

WHY not? Looks like a good suggestion. But instead of making a department of it, why couldn't we just talk it over at Camp-Fire whenever one of us has something to contribute. If you like the idea, keep the ball rolling. If not, no harm done.

Union Hill, New Jersey.

In the space of a year I've noticed three inquiries as to Ju-Jitsu in Camp-Fire, besides my own which you printed about two years ago. My article brought me replies from all over the country; two M.Ds, a C. E., a school teacher and a chap in a hospital being the ones I remember. To this date I carry on a regular correspondence with some of them. Point: There are quite a few of us interested in this.

This salestalk is all pointing to a definite end: In a magazine devoted to adventure and speaking to men who like and follow her figure, don't you think a department devoted to self defense would be a convenience to all? I don't mean a department to teach some young snipe how to beat up a boilermaker, but for reporting and investigating and curious trick, hold or blow used in the various corners of the world, or any queer weapon used by some race in an out-of-the way corner.

If you want me to, I'll start the ball rolling with the attached. I'm not an "expert" on anything. I'm just a chap who's had the opportunity to work out regularly with champs and near champs, pro and amateur, in one of the local gyms. Romanoff, the Greek welter champ, and Hovies, runner-up in the national amateur tournament, furnished a lot of my education in the mat game, and an old chap who in his time had worked out with Sullivan and Corbett drilled me with the gloves.

I don't like publicity, but I sure do "hate — out of" anonymous letters, as Tuttle would say. If you do want to print the enclosed and consider it best to publish my name, o. k., but if you'd just stick it in as a paragraph of your own stuff, I'd be better pleased. However, suit yourself.—A. H. PHELPS.

THIS is what Mr. Phelps enclosed. I'll say it accomplishes a lot in very little space:

Ju-jutsu originated several hundred years ago, before the time of gunpowder, and its purpose was the *elimination* of an opponent. As it was considered to be used only in a deadly combat, there were no fouls. Everything went, with a view to removing the danger to one's life, no matter what position or predicament he be in. The idea was not to lay an opponent on the mat, but to disable or kill him as the circumstances required. Later, when the use of gunpowder made hand-to-hand fighting in battle improbable, Ju-jutsu lapsed into oblivion for some years, from which it was finally dragged, dressed up, repaired and altered to suit the requirements of the Japanese aristocracy.

JU-JUTSU can be roughly divided into three classes. First, tricks for holding; second, tricks for throwing; and third, tricks for disabling or killing an enemy by means of blows or kicks. The latter class is the real essence of the art. It more nearly approximates the old art than either of the other two branches. The first two, as taught today, do not differ greatly from the science as applied to catch-as-catch-can work.

Examples: *Holding tricks*: Our hammerlock similar to one of their holding tricks. Front strangle is our head chancery slipped down to press on the Adam's apple.

Throwing holds: Our flying mare varied in three ways and called something like "shoenage." Applied from the side in a flash without drawing the arm over the shoulder as in the flying mare, the cleverest wrestler will almost always be caught.

Striking tricks: Tsurigume: Knee to opponents crotch. Some other darn fool word covers a jab with the stiffened fingers to the Adam's apple.

Ju-jutsu failed in public competition, first, because the American athletes were stronger, bigger, faster, and had more "guts". Second, because the only dangerous and effective part of the game, the last named class, could not be used. Third, because no man really well versed in the original

Ju-jutsu could be ever induced to appear in a public exhibition.

THE letters that Camp-Fire has been receiving from pioneers of the old West are of interest and value not only because they establish Emerson Hough's "North of 36" as an accurate portrayal of cattle-driving days in the face of Stuart Henry's criticism of that book, but because they give us a real and living picture of an interesting and vital period of our country's history. The day will come when there will be none living who can speak at first hand of that period. Camp-Fire is doing a real service in collecting this information and can take pride as well as enjoyment from these letters.

ADDING to his article in the Los Angeles *Sunday Times*, we have this personal letter from Alex. McLaren:

Hollywood, California.

The ranch at where Roswell, New Mexico, is situated belonged to a man named Chisolm, or he might have spelled it "Chism." I never have seen it in print but do know it was pronounced "Chizzum." Some claimed the trail that left there was the Chisolm Trail, others said it was the Goodnight Trail. At any rate the ranch was not that of Jesse Chisolm but, if I remember right, of John Chisolm or Chism. It was in the early eighties, about '84, that I hit there as a boy with two others drifting from south Texas for whatever the setting sun might have in store for us. My two partners remained, I drifted on after a week or so stop. Building corral fences was not my notion of cow-punching.

I WENT on to White Oaks, New Mexico. There I met Hough who, as I understood at the time, was dabbling a little in law, also working on a paper which, if I remember, was called the *Golden Era*. I may, however, be wrong on the title, for that is a long time since. Hough seemed very interested in the trip I had made. However, it was not an unusual one; many had made it. (I met him again years later in the White Mts.) At any rate I went on working more around such mining camps as Lake Valley, Mogollon, Silver City, Lordsburg and Shakespeare, New Mexico. I returned and later went with cattle into the Indian Nation to the Osage and Ponca country. Then I trailed with a bunch of horses. We started from Texas with as many pinto ponies as we could rustle. Tracked ourselves out of Pintos before we got through the Cheyenne and Arapahoe country, then on across into Arkansas to get rid of the Indian stock in cotton-picking time. I then went back again across Texas to New Mexico, Arizona and ultimately California. Have been in the West ever since the '80's and there is nothing I have ever read that recalls my young days any more vividly than does "North of 36." The detail is absolutely accurate. As for Hugh Pendexter's work I have gleaned a lot of the keenest pleasure in the reading, but what of his western stories I have read antedate my time so far that it would be unjust in me to attempt to pass on their accuracy. At any rate I am strong for Hugh.—Alex McLaren.

FROM Wm. M. Brewer, who went to Abilene in 1870:

Court House, Nanaimo, B. C.

As I arrived in Abilene, Kansas, in July, 1870, as a boy direct from England, between eighteen and nineteen years of age, and remained in that section until the Winter of 1873 and 1874, during which time I was chiefly engaged as a cowboy, wintering during the Winters of 1870 and 1871 with a bunch of about seven hundred head of Texas cattle, on the Little Arkansas River about fifty miles northwesterly from Wichita near which town the "Chisholm" trail crossed the Arkansas River, and later in the Arkansas, Smoky Hill and Solomon Valleys, I feel that I am competent to give you some of the early history of that section, and the following facts are from personal observation.

EMERSON HOUGH in his description of the drive of the first herd of Texas cattle from Texas to Abilene should have given the date as 1869 instead of earlier, because the first herd was not driven into Abilene until after the completion of the Kansas Pacific Railroad to that town, which was in 1869. He may have placed the number of cattle in the herd a little too high, because the largest herd that I know of having been driven over the trail was one of about 2,500 which was driven up in 1871. The average number of cattle to the herd was approximately between 1,000 and 1,500 head.

With these two exceptions I consider Hough's description of the drive to be as nearly in accordance with the customs of that day as is possible for any one to describe who had no experience or opportunity for personal observation, and to be strikingly realistic.

ABILENE, Kansas, came into prominence in 1869 on the completion of the Kansas Pacific Railroad to that point as a shipping point for Texas cattle to Kansas City and Chicago, which had been driven up the old Chisholm trail, and held the position as the chief shipping point until 1871, when the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fé Railroad was built into Newton, Kansas, which point then divided honors with Abilene.

The Chisholm trail was the main route between the Red River at the Texas border and Abilene which was the northern terminus of that trail. The trail crossed the Arkansas River near Wichita and the town of Newton northerly from Wichita was built on the trail. The town sprang up like a mushroom in a night and threatened to outdistance Abilene not only as a shipping point for Texas cattle, but as a bad, tough place.

IN THE Fall of 1870 the Kansas Pacific Railroad had been completed to Denver, Colorado, but Abilene held first place as a point of shipment until 1872 when the rapid settlement of the prairies of Kansas along the Arkansas, Smoky Hill and Solomon Valleys had caused the herds of Texas cattle to de diverted to points further west or to Ellsworth on the Kansas Pacific Railroad and Dodge City on the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fé Railroad.

MR. HENRY is correct when he states that the old Chisholm trail was the direct route between the Red River on the Texas Border and Abilene, Kansas. South of the Red River various routes were used northerly from the Gulf of Mexico and the Rio Grande, the route depending upon the starting point in Texas, but all headed for a central or common crossing across the Red River which was the southern terminus of the Chisholm trail.

The chief points or sections from which Texas cattle were driven north in those days were Lockhart, San Antonio, Austin, Houston, Waco, Dallas and various other sections. From the Red River to Kansas the Chisholm trail traversed the Indian Nation, now the State of Oklahoma.

About 1874 the settlements were becoming so numerous that the cattle-men were forced to follow routes in driving still further west, and about that time either Ogallala or Cheyenne, Wyoming, was favored for a northern terminus of trails from the south, but there never was a route as popular, as prominent or as well known and over which more cattle were driven than the old Chisholm trail with Abilene as its northern terminus.

IN READING Emerson Hough's story, "North of 36," I looked upon it as well written fiction with facts for a foundation. I recognized that personally Hough had had no opportunity to know the West as early as 1870 nor could he from personal knowledge describe customs and characters such as took part in the drive described in his story and I let it go at that, but with regard to the question as to whether Mr. Henry in his criticisms evidences a superior knowledge of the West, I am not prepared to state because I have not read his criticisms in full, nor am I prepared to state whether either Mr. Henry or Mr. Hough shows a more detailed and accurate knowledge of the old West than does Hugh Pendexter, but I do know that Mr. Henry is right in many of the statements which I find in your "Camp-Fire" notes. For instance, Abilene did not exist in 1867. At that time there was a stage station on the old Smoky Hill Overland Route at Mud Creek, which emptied into the Smoky Hill River about half a mile southwesterly from the Abilene town in 1870. The stage station was kept by Mr. Tim Hersey, who later in 1870 removed his family to Beloit on the Solomon River, which town site he actually owned and founded, and where he built a dam across the river as well as a sawmill and a grist-mill, the machinery being driven by water-power. When the railroad built into Abilene and beyond the Hersey stage station, Mud Creek was abandoned.

IN 1869, when the Texas cattle first commenced to be driven up the trail, the town of Abilene was not organized, had no police force, in fact, was merely a small hamlet as stated in your "Camp-Fire" columns. Early in the Spring of 1870 the leading citizens headed by the McCoy Brothers (Jim and Joseph), realized that there was a possibility, in fact a strong probability that thousands of heads of Texas cattle would be driven to that point for shipment to the East, and these men got together, organized a village, and having had a taste in 1869 of the conduct that might be expected when hundreds of cowboys who traveled up the trail in charge of the many herds, aggregating in number, thousands of heads of long-horned Texas cattle, were visiting the town after several weeks drive and with a big thirst for bourbon whisky, determined to appoint a suitable man town marshal.

NELSE WYLIE was sheriff of Dickinson County of which Abilene was the county seat in 1870 and he was called into the conference which was being held to decide on what was the best course to pursue to find a suitable man to act as town marshal, the qualifications necessary being absolute fearlessness, quick on the trigger, an impartial administrator who, while giving everybody a fair deal, would hold his own and uphold the law, at the same time using proper discretion.

Several men were suggested to this conference but Tom Smith who had established a reputation for dare-devil bravery in Utah during the building of the Union Pacific Railroad east of Odgen, was selected as being the most suitable amongst all those proposed.

An arrangement was made with Tom Smith and he arrived in Abilene a short time before the arrival of the first herd of cattle in 1870. One of his first actions as town marshal was the posting of notices in large prominent print in the hotels and all public places notifying every one to refrain from carrying firearms during their stay in town. This order he enforced strictly and impartially but with discretion, so that the earlier arrivals from Texas learned to recognize his authority and showed that appreciation for his nerve which all real red-blooded men are at times willing to show.

BILL HICKOK (Wild Bill) during most of the year 1870 was city marshal at Hays City, near Fort Hays and about one hundred and twenty miles or one thirty miles west of Abilene on the Smoky Hill River, but it was reported that, owing to an attack being made on him by a bunch of raw recruits when Bill was down with chills and fever, which resulted in his killing two out of the five attackers and wounding the other three, he left Hays City and migrated to Kansas City.

Wild Bill was born in Missouri and during the latter part of the Civil War was scouting for the Northern Army. He had started a reputation for quick and accurate shooting when as a young man he was employed as a stock-tender, I believe at Plum Creek, Nebraska, on the Platte River Overland Stage Route where in self-defense he shot and killed one of the stage-drivers, who was a quite notoriously tough character and recognized gunman.

Bill Hickok, with whom I was first personally acquainted in 1871, was appointed city or town marshal in Abilene in that year to succeed Tom Smith, who had been killed by a couple of homesteaders on Chapman Creek in the late Fall of 1870. Hickok (Wild Bill) had never been marshal of Abilene before 1871.

Bill Hickok was not such a bad man as lots of people imagined, so far as my knowledge goes. True, he was a professional gambler, but so were many men of that day. He never sought a quarrel, but never backed down from a fight and was so quick on the draw and shoot that any ordinary man could have his six-shooter drawn before Bill reached for his and then Bill's shot would be fired first. In other words, he was so proficient in handling a six-shooter that he had the advantage of about ten seconds on any of the gunmen on the plains, and it must be remembered that in those days the old cap and ball pistol was the weapon in use, as there were

no metallic cartridges used until about 1872, and possibly it was later than that.

THE idea of women accompanying a herd of cattle from Lockhart, Texas, to Abilene, Kansas and presumably the first herd on the trail, is certainly far-fetched and I consider Emerson Hough was drawing very considerably on his imagination when he introduced the Texas girl and her negress companion and cook into his story.

The permanent residents in Abilene, including the storekeepers who kept the stores open the year round, were by no means numerous in 1870, in fact, at the end of the cattle season about October the town was practically depopulated, because the local trade was inconspicuous when compared with the transient trade which was attracted to that point during the cattle-shipping season.

It is possible that Mr. Stuart Henry who criticized Emerson Hough's story may be some relative of a Mr. Henry who established a real estate business and was a pioneer wheat-raiser in that section of Kansas which, would account for Stuart Henry's acquaintance with Abilene and its vicinity.

DURING the period between the close of the cattle-shipping season in the Fall and its re-opening in the following Spring Abilene was a pretty dull place to pass away the time, although there were several of the pioneers who remained in the town all Winter, but the cowboys, gamblers and other hangers-on left for their homes, the majority of them having come from Texas or some other southern State. The criticism that these men would celebrate the Fourth of July at that time as described by Emerson Hough is certainly well taken, because almost all of the cowboys, and a very large proportion of the gamblers were Southern sympathizers and many had served in the Confederate ranks during the Civil War which had closed in 1866.

There are many occurrences which happened during those early days in Abilene and that portion of the West which I could describe from personal observations, but I have already made this communication too long, I will close with good wishes to the members of the Camp-Fire.—WM. M. BREWER.

FROM J. R. Blocker, who drove cattle over the Chisholm Trail for over twenty years:

San Antonio, Texas.

I wish to enter my protest against Mr. Henry's criticism. I consider the book a much more faithful picture of those times than the corrections offered by the critic.

MY QUALIFICATIONS for entering this discussion are: I have been in Texas since 1852 and in the cattle business since I was 12 years of age. My first herd went from Austin, Texas, to Abilene in 1871 and every year after that we drove a little farther north, until we reached Yellowstone River about 200 miles from the Canadian border. I drove cattle over the Chisholm Trail for over 20 years. I personally drove cattle, over 24,000 head of steers, to Yellowstone River in 1883; 83,000 to Wyoming and Colorado in 1886. If Mr. Henry will examine this record he will find that between 400,000 and 500,000 cattle crossed the Platte River at Ogallala in 1883 and 1884, going to Wyoming, Montana and Dakota very near the Canadian borders.

HIS assertion that no one is now living who went over the trail is also wrong. He evidently does not know of the Old Trail Drivers Association which meets every year in San Antonio, Texas, of which I was the first president. Mr. Geo. W. Saunders is the present president and other members are Col. I. T. Pryor, former president of the American National Live Stock Assn., Geo. W. West, W. H. Jennings, M. A. Withers of Lockart and 75 or 100 others who drove over that trail many times. Also Mrs. Burke of La Salla County, a most estimable lady, went over the trail in the early '70's. I know in 1871 the conditions were exactly as Hough describes them and the difference of such a few years does not alter the true picture of the place.

It was just as wild as he depicts, with dance-halls, saloons and gambling-houses and a new dead man for breakfast every morning, as the boys used to say. As to the morality of the place where cowboys, mule-drivers, buffalo-skinners and bushwhackers met after months of hardship, the picture is not overdrawn. If Mr. Henry could have seen those lean, hungry cowboys in those dance-halls he would not think they were as weary and wizened and forlorn as he imagines they were.

THE size of the herds at the beginning of the Trail Driving was only about 1,000 to 1,500, but that was increased 3,000 and 4,000. I know of one herd of 6,000 driven by Bill Montgomery from Victoria, Texas, to Lordsburg, New Mexico.

His statements that no one without considerable money could finance a herd is also a mistake. Any one of reputation could buy all the horses and cattle they wanted and pay for them when they returned, the only money necessary being just enough to buy beans, bacon, coffee and flour. The hands were paid off when the herds were delivered.

MR. HENRY'S assertion that Bill Hickock "passed his time gambling in his saloon and manifested no interest in laws or jail" is contrary to the fact. Many men still living will so testify. He controledl the bad element in many of those border towns after killing off the worst characters and made as good a marshal as those times and conditions allowed.

Of course as in all fiction some parts of the book are overdrawn and the date may be three or four years too early, but it is, taken altogether, a very true picture of those stirring days now passed. I am glad to give my appreciation of Mr. Hough for his efforts to preserve a history of that time.—J. R. BLOCKER.

FROM J. Marvin Hunter, editor and publisher of the *Frontier Times:*

Bandera, Texas.

I am truly glad Henry's "hand has been called," by able writers throughout the country. Hough's description of the pioneers was true to life, no exaggeration, no misrepresentation, and I can not understand why Henry should deliberately make such an attack unless it be that he was bidding for a notoriety that, to say the least, would be unwelcome to any real American.—J. MARVIN HUNTER.

THE following is from a long article by J. E. B. in the Chicago *Evening Post Literary Review*. Again the point is made that Mr. Henry has criticized Hough for some statements that Hough did not make. The article was sent in by Howard Herrick with the following letter:

Chicago.

As I spent seven months handling publicity for "The Covered Wagon" I had an opportunity to ascertain something of Emerson Hough's authenticity in matters Western, as I spent most of that time in the West and talked with many old-timers.—Howard Herrick.

The "review," labeled "Maligning Our Neighbors in Fiction," was so filled with gross errors and did such unwarranted injustice to Emerson Hough, one of the most accurate and true historians of the West, that in the words of one Westerner: "Henry's hand should be called."

SUCH statements as the following appear in Henry's article:

"I wish to express my regret that our school children are deriving their notions of western pioneers and their times, from such extravaganzas (as 'North of 36')." "A society has been organized for the purpose of calling a halt to such pseudo-pictures or histories, with their misguiding information, superheated imaginings, spurious hues, spread before Americans for profit." "Every time a tenderfoot appeared (in the West), such as the author of 'North of 36,' he was filled with amazing tales designed to flabbergast green easterners," and so on.

Stuart Henry, by the way, is the author of a couple of books having to do with "Paris Evenings" and "Paris Salons." And when he states further in his "review": "Mr. Hough errs strangely when he represents that so large a herd as 4,500 cattle could be driven over the Chisholm trail in '67," we begin to wonder if Henry has ever gotten very far away from those Parisian salons. . . .

MR. HENRY gets a bit tangled up in his own rope when he says: "The one historical character appearing in 'North of 36' is Wild Bill Hickok. But Wild Bill was not marshal (of Abilene, Kan.) in '67. Abilene had no marshal." Henry has evidently overlooked the fact that Emerson Hough stated nine different times in the book that Wild Bill was marshal of Hayes City! Hayes and Abiene, although doubtless small, compared to Paris, France, were, and still are, two separate and distinct towns.

In another part of the Henry "review" appears a truly laughable statement: "Steer, not cow, was the generic term used." Referring to this, Gene Rhodes, author of "Good Men and True," "Bransford in Arcadia," "Desire of the Moth," and other most excellent portrayals of cowboy character and range life, writes:

"Imagine one setting himself up to be a critic of western books and western ways, saying 'steer-boys,' 'steer-camp,' 'steer-ponies,' etc. Can you beat it?"

But as there is hardly a paragraph of Stuart Henry's review that does not contain at least one such gross error, it is impossible to quote them all here. . . .

THE Abilene *Reflector* of March 13, the *Pioneer Magazine* of Texas, Marvin Hunter, in the *Frontier Times* of Bandera, Texas, as well as other publications in Denver, San Antonio, in fact all through the West, have been steadily taking pot-shots at Stuart Henry and his sneering "review" of a great work. . . .

The words of Emerson Hough and the other old-timers shall stand through the ages as written, unshaken by any number of such "salon-reviews."—J. E. B.

HERE'S one for our collection of the biggest thrills any of us has experienced:

Los Angeles, California.

I went back to Virginia visiting. Was awakened in a Pullman by thunder. Had to laugh at a memory. In that same place twenty-five years ago I was on duty in a mail-car. As the train slowed up, I was watching a lady and was, of course, looking back. Something brushed my cheek, and I turned my face against the claws of a huge bear whose wide open jaws and fierce eyes looked like a nightmare. The thunder? Oh, that was the yell I gave, still echoing twenty-five years later.

P. S.—The brute was dead. The shipper had him on his hind legs ready to load in the express car.—H. B. STRAYER.

WE ARE selling some of our cover originals by a new system. Covers will be auctioned by mail as heretofore, but instead of holding all bids until the end of the year, we can send each cover, when available for auction, to the highest bidder one month after the issue of the magazine bearing that cover has appeared on the news-stands. Thus bidding on the cover of the Nov. 10th issue, out Oct. 10th, will be closed Nov. 10th. Minimum bid, ten dollars. All covers will be sent to the highest bidders express collect. In case two or more bidders offer the same amount for one cover it will go to the bid first received.—A. S. H.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the second and third issues of each month. Full list in second issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

1—3. The Sea. In Three Parts
4, 5. Islands and Coasts. In Two Parts
6, 7. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
8. Australia and Tasmania
9. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
10. New Guinea
11. Philippine Islands
12. Hawaiian Islands and China
13. Japan
14—17. Asia. In Four Parts
18—25. Africa. In Eight Parts
26. Turkey
27. Asia Minor
28—30. Balkans. In Three Parts.
31. Scandinavia
32. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
33. Great Britain
34—36. South America. In Three Parts
37. Central America
38, 39. Mexico. In Two Parts
40—46. Canada. In Seven Parts
47. Alaska
48. Baffinland and Greenland
49—54. Western U. S. In Six Parts
55—58. Middle Western U. S. In Four Parts
59—64. Eastern U. S. In Six Parts
Radio
Mining and Prospecting
Weapons, Past and Present. In Three Parts
Salt and Fresh Water Fishing
Forestry in the United States
Tropical Forestry
Aviation
Army Matters, United States and Foreign
American Anthropology North of Panama Canal
First Aids on the Trail
Health-Building Outdoors
Standing Information

Note from an "A. A." Man

San Francisco, Calif.

TO ALL MY "A. A." INQUIRERS:

And now for a change of address. A change that will carry your letters to an island almost at the end of all the world.

October 8th is when I slip through the Golden Gate for this beautiful Island of Beginning Again. What with my ever increasing "A. A." work, the writing of South Sea tales and a book that will be in its scope quite unlike any other island volume, and managing my own avocado and vanilla plantation, I glimpse shining straight ahead of me, near the foot of a green sea trail, days that I am going to share in print with you.

From over all the round of this globe you have written me during four happy years of "A. A." work. Keep ever in mind that I want you to write in a like manner long after I have gone home to build the House of the Sun in my beloved Paradise Valley. The change is—CHARLES BROWN, JR., Papeete, Tahiti, Society Islands, South Pacific Ocean.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do not write to the magazine itself.

Farmlands of Czecho-Slovakia

NO LONGER does the difference in exchange rates work to the benefit of the American:

Question:—"I am writing to ask about conditions in Central Europe. I am thinking of buying farm land there and wish to know if:

1. The present rate of exchange operates to the benefit of a purchase.

2. What is the value of good land well located in Czecho-Slovakia and Austria?

3. Which country do you think is in best condition and has the best future?

I think Czecho-Slovakia appeals to me more. Seems to be in much better shape.

I am an experienced farmer, have capital and am acquainted with England, France and Denmark. A friend recently from Denmark says chances are good there and that a farmer out of debt has a good thing. I would like to take advantage of any exchange rate and I will appreciate any information you can give. If published please withhold name." — —— ——, Menomonie, Wisc.

Answer, by Mr. Fleischer:—Before going into details answering your questions, I would like to correct an erroneous impression on the part of all those who think that it is a comparatively easy matter to make use of the advantages of a high exchange rate when buying property abroad. The heyday for such transactions is passed, in fact it has been *passé* since 1922.

People in Austria and Germany woke up to the fact that they could demand dollar prices—lower of course than ours—for good-sized farms and get them. The market, so I have been informed, has gone up; and to purchase land over there now means expenses and more expenses. The State is looking for a rake-off and gets it. Sales taxation adds another score. If the seller must pay as much as sixty per cent. personal-income tax he is usually wise enough to add it to the purchase price, and if he is to make a profit at all, discounting the tax, you can figure out yourself that the ultimate figure compares well with the price for a moderate farm in this country, especially in the Middle West. Besides, translate several thousand dollars into marks, and you need an expert accountant to figure out the "higher denominations."

However, since you seem to wish to know about Czecho-Slovakia, the America of Europe, I will answer your questions with reference to the land of my birth.

1. No—decidedly not. Czech crowns are high, and the comparative scale of living is higher in Czecho-Slovakia than over here.

2. Of Austria I have no recent reports. In Czecho-Slovakia good land is high, and as far as I can ascertain hard to get. The recent prices paid for timber and beet-sugar land are the equivalent of one hundred and eighty-five dollars per acre!

3. Czecho-Slovakia. Next to England, in the best condition of all nations participating in the late war.

Of Denmark I do not pretend to know much; besides it is not included in my territory. I am enclosing a leaflet about Czecho-Slovakia, which I hope will prove of interest to you. Within the scope of this letter it is impossible to advise you what to do, but if you care to inform me of your exact wishes and preferences, your possible working capital and crops you have experience with, I shall make a detailed report on your chances. It will take a little time, but I believe I can be of service to you. I would get definite data and locations. Please remember, I am speaking of *Czecho-Slovakia only*.

The reason for my asking these questions is simply a matter of convenience for both of us. If you are really interested, and prove your good faith by confiding in me, I shall go a long way to clear obstacles for you. I had a bad experience with one reader of *Adventure;* after inquiring about similar matters as you and getting a detailed answer from me, the obtaining of all facts somewhat involved me; he merely used it for a purpose not intended, and since then I have become somewhat skeptical.

I am always glad to help, and all of the "Ask Adventure" editors are; but we very often use our time and good will for naught. I am sure you will agree with me that our service, since it is gratuitous, should be used only to the best advantage of those inquiring.

If you care to have definite data, write again. Locations, area and earnings of certain farms and lands will be at your disposal. It is necessary for me to have the information asked for in order to judge whether or not to encourage or discourage you. Let me warn you that it takes quite an amount to make a go of it.

Read Rule 1 and the other rules.

Where to Invite One's Soul

HOW do the wilderness sections of western North Carolina sound?

Question:—"I do not know whether my inquiry rightly comes within your sections or not but hope that you can give me some information on the subject.

I will first give you a little information as to myself so that you can better judge what would be suitable to my desires. I am forty years of age. Have been a deep-water man for the last twenty years and am now desiring to return to my native land and settle down. Entire family consists of self and a veteran pit dog. Have several thousand dollars and sufficient income so that I need never work in order to supply my simple wants. Am very fond of hunting and fishing and have done quite a bit of both in all parts of the world.

THE WANTS

1st. Would like to buy a little place in southeastern Pennsylvania or northeastern Maryland, preferably in the mountainous sections along the Susquehanna River or some of its tributaries, where I can have a small truck garden and a few fruit-trees to occupy my time as well as be near to some fair small-game ground and fishing.

2nd. Would like to know where I can get books on small-game trapping in that region and the game and fish laws of the two States mentioned.

3rd. Do not want to make a living—just to have enough work not to go stale and sufficient sport to make life pleasant. It has not always been the latter at sea. Do not want any place on salt water.

I believe that about covers everything . If you know of a region where you think that I can locate would appreciate the information. Was in the Conewago Mountains last year and found a fine place at the junction of the Conewago and Bermudian Creeks; but there are too many campers in that place to get the solitude that I desire.

Please do not publish name." — —— ——, Cavite, P. I.

Answer, by Mr. Shannon:—C-a-v-i-t-e—sure looks familiar in print, and I'm wondering whether the bands still play nights along the Lunetta. Kissed the Islands good-by twenty years ago—and haven't got the smell of 'em out o' my nostrils yet.

And a sailor who has saved a few thousand American dollars deserves prompt attention and—then some.

Kinder envy you and the pit bull at that. Can't cut out the grind yet myself—but I do know the sort of place that would probably suit you best.

THERE are many good places in Maryland and Pennsylvania, of course; but I'm after thinking that the Great Smokies would suit you better if you want to get away from civilization—sho' 'nuf. Western Nawth Carolina has the world beaten a block for year-around climate. There are sections between Asheville and the Tennessee line that are practically wilderness even yet. And the National Forests have protected game until the overflow assures one of real hunting when the frost is on the pumpkin.

Put a few acres into apples. Raise a few chickens. Loaf and live—watch the changing clouds on the everlasting peaks——

Plenty of trout in the streams. Small game abundant. Bear and deer if you want to *hunt* them. Nothing in either of the two States you mentioned to equal it that I know of—you realize that I don't claim to know it all, of course.

Write *Outdoor Life*, Denver, Col., for list of books on trapping small game and digest of fish and game laws.

Now if you want some definite information I can tell you just where I'd stop if I were situated like you and wanted to get away from salt water.

Sorry your letter traveled so long and far trying to catch up with me, but like other folks with itching feet I'm on the move most of the time.

I assure you that I will be glad to send printed matter and any information you may require or would like to see concerning the section I have mentioned—or the section you first selected for that matter, although I haven't been in either State for the past two or three years.

Firearms for a Three-Year Expedition

ADMIRAL PEARY'S plan:

Question:—"May I trouble you to answer the following questions which, I believe, come under your section of 'Ask Adventure'?

We are going on an extended trip to start from this city and to cover some three years, on a seagoing yacht. We contemplate visiting Central and South America, Alaska, cross the Bering Strait to Siberia, down the coast and around to Africa.

1. Considered taking Savage .22 high-power rifles for ordinary light shooting, with soft-nose cartridges. Do you believe that this rifle would be appropriate?

2. Will the Savage .250-3000 be heavy enough for any shooting that we may have to do on the trip? However, for the dangerous African game, such as elephant and rhino, I would take a heavy gun—a .400 Whelan or double rifle of .450 bore.

3. What caliber and make revolver would you recommend that the party be equipped with?

4. Would it be well to carry along extra parts for the guns on a trip of this length, or would you suggest extra guns?

There are sixteen members of the party, and we naturally wish to minimize the amount of ammunition carried by selecting standard rifles and revolvers."—NORMA FRED, New Orleans, La.

Answer, by Mr. Wiggins:—I would not recommend the Savage .22 high-power rifles for general use on the sorts of game you will undoubtedly encounter, as its performance on the larger mammals is an uncertain quantity. While deadly when the conditions are favorable, still there are features, such as the quick break-up of the bullet, that do not encourage me to consider it a perfectly trustworthy weapon to attack dangerous game with. I like and use the Savage rifle myself, but in larger caliber.

2. The .250-3000 Savage rifle, if used with the Western hollow point or UMC bronze-point bullets, will be powerful enough for most game, Cottar having successfully used it on lion and leopard, but while he killed elephant with it, still he thinks it too light for them. So while I believe you would be safe in selecting the .250-3000, may I venture to advise the use of the 3000 Savage take-down with pistol-grip stock, as a rifle that leaves little to be desired as a sporting weapon? It equals the ballistics of the Service rifle, you see, and the efficiency of that is undisputed, I feel sure.

3. As to revolvers there are only two makes to consider—Colt and Smith & Wesson. The quality of both is unsurpassed; the selection is a matter of personal preference. I own and use both arms, and can not recommend one as better than the other.

AS TO caliber: You will be compelled to purchase ammunition abroad if you are as enthusiastic a powder-burner as the undersigned, and for that reason I recommend a caliber for which ammunition is easily obtained. The .38 Special is a dependable, accurate and fairly powerful arm, and the European .380 long and short cartridges will also shoot in it. Of course, for practise you will do well to take along a pair of .22-caliber revolvers of the same make as your large ones, to keep in condition with the heavier arms. That's my plan, at least.

The cartridge most easily obtained here or abroad is the old .44 Winchester, or .44-40 cartridge, which is a good compromise for revolver and rifle. In either Colt or Smith & Wesson revolvers, or Winchester Model 1892 or Remington Model 14½ this is a very popular and powerful load, especially if the UMC Hi-Speed loads are used in the rifles.

But in view of recoil, accuracy and the fact that certain South American republics prohibit the importation of larger arms than the .38 caliber in revolvers, I believe the .38 Special will be the best revolver for general use by the members of your party. Allow me to recommend the use of the .38 *Colt Special* ammunition, it having a square-pointed bullet, thus giving better killing-power than the round-nosed type of projectiles.

4. I will advise the plan of taking two arms of each pattern for each member of your party, as well as a supply of the spare parts for the weapons, and a liberal supply of ammunition, oils, greases, cleaning-compounds, etc. Admiral Peary told me that was his plan in his expeditions, and surely no man knew better how to outfit for the long trails. I will advise gold-bead front sights on the revolvers and gold or ivory beads on the rifles.

And don't forget that a couple of Browning heavy-type machine guns can be used quite often to good advantage, too. In certain parts of the globe I'd be apt to feel safer could I once more crouch behind a Browning and know there was a full belt in it.

I enclose a little literature on arms. Trust I have covered all desired information fully and that you will not hesitate to write again in case I have overlooked anything.

Climate and Wild Life of Portuguese East Africa

THE subjoined monograph has been printed in leaflet form on hard paper. The leaflet may be obtained free from the "Ask Adventure" expert responsible for it: namely R. G. Waring, Corunna, Ont., Canada. Don't expect any response unless you enclose addressed envelop and return postage:

PORTUGUESE East Africa, along with British East Africa or Kenya Colony, as it is now known, are the two remaining big-game hunting-grounds of Africa, and it is these two sections in which nearly all the different African species are still found in more or less numbers. Strict game-laws prevail, and one who is a non-resident pays handsomely for hunting-privileges, with a limit to the game that may be killed. Your photograph is attached to the license, which may cost you up to three hundred dollars, for which you will be allowed to kill one elephant, and perhaps one of each of the various species of boks and antelopes. The cost of the license varies with the game and district.

The Makua, the indigenous native tribe, are very indifferent hunters. No natives are allowed to have in their possession any kind of firearms so their only weapons are their knives and spears, and these are not responsible for any game larger than gazelles or the smaller types of bok.

The natives depend largely on traps and snares. The former are usually pits dug to a depth of five to seven feet, deftly covered by twigs and leaves, when any animal caught therein may be easily speared to death.

The snares are very cunningly laid, and are used largely for the kagga or wild guinea-fowl, of which by this means large numbers are obtained. In the grass runways the snare is set in such a way that the bird can not fail to be caught if it attempts to pass on.

Once or twice a year a hunt is organized in which probably two to three hundred men will take part. Notice is sent to all the surrounding chiefs, who proceed to the place of meeting with picked men, each chief bringing a net five feet high and from eighty to one hundred feet long.

A location for the nets having been chosen, these are placed end to end and firmly staked.

The best spearmen are then selected and placed at convenient stations along the line and behind the nets. On this particular occasion I, with the *commandante* of the Matadane and one other European, were guests, and we were placed in front of the nets at intervals of about eighty yards apart.

Under the direction of a head man the rest of the men had departed to a point some three or four miles away. After a time the sound of the horns and tomtoms commenced, and needless to say the din was enough to drive every living thing out of the bush, but not our way.

Lying flat on the ground, we certainly had the pleasure of viewing frightened bunches of game crossing the line of nets diagonally; but as nothing was visible except a moving mass of legs and hoofs it was quite impossible to get in a shot owing to the underbrush. Toward the finish one water-bok did plunge into a net, but not before he had a couple of bullets in him. He was promptly speared.

From the direction and formation of the men on their arrival I decided that either they had lost their sense of direction or else had none, for instead of arriving in crescent formation thay all came in at right angles to the net position, hence all the game was crossing broadside to the nets.

HIPPOPOTAMI were fairly numerous in the district. It was whilst taking the soundings of a river that I saw my first hippopotamus. Floating down the river, blowing water through his nostrils and greatly magnified by the delicate early morning mist of the tropics, his enormous bulk is not easily forgotten. My "boy" Omari shouted, "*Bunduki*," the Swahili word for gun; but to irritate wild game of such proportions with a .44 Winchester carbine would be asking for trouble where none is intended; for the hippopotamus is not ferocious unless attacked and wounded, when an ordinary rowboat or native dugout canoe is crushed in his powerful jaws like an eggshell.

I was standing on the banks of the Melual River one day talking to a Portuguese corporal when a hippopotamus came up to the surface, directly opposite us. The corporal had a Krag-Jorgensen rifle and I had my Winchester .44. We both fired. I distinctly saw the effect of my shot, for on impact the bullet, an ordinary leaden one, seemed to go all to pieces, giving out a spray-like effect. The shot by the Portuguese evidently penetrated deeply, but with what result we never knew, for the hippo gradually submerged. One that was killed by a friend of mine later on had no less than thirteen bullets of various calibers in him.

The devastation and mischief that even one hippopotamus can effect in a single night is unbelievable. Three acres of a rice-field seem to be a fair meal ashore for one of these beasts.

Leopards are numerous, and the natives fear them perhaps more than anything else. In their native state they are quite different from the long, slim, gaunt creatures one sees in the traveling circus. Fat and sleek, broad-chested and alert, they are formidable and dangerous to encounter. When hungry they are bold and will sometimes venture into a native village in daylight.

There seems to be a considerable amount of superstition among the natives regarding the leopard. At a killing at which I was present, although the leopard was mortally wounded by rifle-fire, one man more venturesome than the rest rushed in to finish the animal, and got finished himself. Immediately following him came a large number of men, who literally took a delight in making a sieve out of what would have been a beautiful skin, for in their frenzy they stabbed and stabbed. There was just enough of the hide intact to cover a leather pistol-holster.

The prize was carried down to the river-bank suspended on a pole, and here the rest of the day was spent in mysterious rites, accompanied by the burning of the carcass. I wanted to get the claws and pads, and also some of the teeth. My request was in vain. The only information I could get was if any parts were detached, they would again come to life, and many leopards would be around again.

Lions occasionally visited us, not individually but in bands of fours and fives. When seen they are usually on the trail of other game and if not molested will seldom attack unless driven to it by hunger.

Their roar is often heard, and previous to sunrise, in the still air, it is carried long distances, often three or four miles away. The hyena, the lion's chief follower, is usually in the vicinity of the lions, snarling and snapping, trying to get a portion of a feast of which he is no provider.

PROBABLY one of the first things that strike a newcomer to Africa is the total absence of sweetly singing birds. After being used to bird life in other lands, a visit to Africa would reveal to us what it is to be without them. It is certainly a form of blight; and although a land of sunshine, with ideal conditions, forest and shrubbery wherein one would look for song-birds, not a song is heard; nothing but the raucous call of the *jamara kuku*, a woodpecker type, or some other of his species, comes from trees with which you are surrounded. Birds of plumage like the flamingo, the egret and a species of colored dove, hawks and owls and birds of prey and wild ducks, constitute the principal bird life of Portuguese East Africa.

There are many varieties of snakes, some of them very venomous. There are the mamba, the cobra, the puff adder, night adder and pythons.

The most deadly of all the African species is the black mamba. This snake at certain seasons of the year is extremely dangerous, and should you be unfortunate enough to be between it and its den, it would not hesitate to attack you; and so lightning-like are its movements that a shotgun even in the hands of an expert is of little avail. From its bite, death ensues in from ten to twenty minutes.

It is the custom for white men traveling far from civilization to provide themselves with a serum, put up in hermetically sealed glass syringes. At the Port Elizabeth Museum scientific research and experiments on snake venom have been carried out on a large scale with the above results. These may be purchased from the curator of the museum.

The cobras and adders are also very deadly, but much slower in action. The python can not be said to be venomous, but crushes its prey in its powerful coils.

In conclusion a few remarks on the climate.

In many sections, particularly along the swampy lands of the coast, the climate is very trying to the white man. The humidity and miasma of these swamp-lands are the undoing of most men, and sooner or later one is compelled to seek a change. There are cases where one escapes the fever for a year, but even with every precaution malaria will creep in eventually, and when once it gets a hold, it stays. If neglected it becomes chronic and in time develops to maturity. On reaching this stage it is black-water fever, and should the victim recover—mortality is high!—he is better to forsake the tropics forever.

The temperature in the hot months reaches 116 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade. The rainfall I was unable to obtain any statistics of. The best months of the year are from March to October in the dry season. In the highlands of the interior the air is purer and therefore more healthful.

WITH regard to drinking-water one has to be particularly careful. In fact if it were possible the advice given by the late Cecil Rhodes, answering an inquiry addressed him on the subject, seems more to the point. The answer to the question was—

"Boil the water, then filter it and throw it away."

On the coral island of Mozambique no water is obtainable other than that collected in rain-water tanks. This is very deadly to the health of the few Europeans that are there.

Any exposure to the direct rays of the sun is to be avoided. Carelessness in this respect is requited by fever. When once fever gets in one's system it will be brought out and fully developed if one gets caught in a shower without any shelter.

After a few years' residence one becomes inoculated with quinin, so that a twenty-grain dose can be taken. It is usual at this stage to use a hypodermic injection of quinin. Each dose is in a glass container in the form of a syringe, with needle and plunger complete. These are put up in cases of dozens by a French firm, and there is no doubt of the superior efficacy of the hypodermic treatment as against the stomach treatment. However, proper sterilization is required. Any carelessness in this respect is fraught with serious consequences.

With care and attention to matters of diet and hygiene one can spend two or three years there without any impairment to health.—R. G. WARING.

The "Lost Cabin" Placer

STILL another legend; there must be so many more that we can't agree to publish them all:

Question:—"Since I have made my home in Wyoming since the end of the war, I have heard several accounts of a lost mine or hidden gold known as the Lost Cabin Mine.

As I have heard the tale from several old-timers

here I have developed quite an interest in the story of the Lost Cabin. Would it be asking too much for the story from you?

If convenient will you please tell me when Atlantic City at the 'Miners' Delight' was at the peak of its boom? What was its greatest population?"—R. R. RAUSCH, Casper, Wyo.

Answer, by Mr. Middleton:—I have heard many versions of the "Lost Cabin" placers, my knowledge being all hearsay. There seems to be a prevalent opinion that there is, or was, truth behind the many different stories which have been circulated and which have been the base of much conjecture and fiction.

It seems that in October, 1865, two men reached Fort Reno on the Powder River in a badly exhausted and dazed condition. Their story was that they had belonged to a party of seven prospectors from the Black Hills region and that while traveling along the base of the Big Horn Range they had come to a park in heavy timber, on the banks of a swift stream. They here found rich indications of gold, and on digging down, struck bed rock at the depth of some three feet, where they found gold very plentiful and coarse with many good-sized nuggets.

They had two pack animals loaded with tools and supplies. They immediately went into camp, building them a log cabin, then a flume, and began to wash out the gold. The seven men washed gold for three days when they were attacked by Indians. Five of the seven men were killed. When it became dark the two men who were left gathered up the gold and succeeded in escaping through the darkness and heavy timber.

Traveling by night and hiding by day, not having any idea as to direction, after three nights of continuous walking, not knowing where they were going, they reached the above fort.

A Mr. Clay, who for years was clerk and assistant at the post trader's store at Fort Laramie, says that the men who escaped came to the sutler's store at Fort Laramie and asked him to put their gold in the safe. It seems the seven men had washed out seven thousand dollars in gold in the time they had worked, beside building their cabin and the flume.

THEIR story was not credited. At that time there were many desertions among the soldiers who wanted to hunt for gold; so to protect himself and hold the soldiers from deserting, the lieutenant in command held the two men under guard and sent them with a detachment to Fort Fetterman. The commander there became convinced of the truth of their story and allowed them to return to Fort Laramie, where they remained that winter. In the spring they decided on an attempt to find the lost cabin and gold-field. Being ignorant of the country, they went back to the Black Hills and started on the old trail anew. Nothing was ever heard of them after reaching the mountains of Wyoming, and the supposition is that they were killed by the Indians.

Many expeditions were formed by different parties to search for the lost cabin, but all were unsuccessful. There was a time for twelve or fourteen years when it was unsafe to any party to go into these regions because of the Indians, who were numerous and powerful, so that the mystery of the Lost Cabin remains a mystery today.

The Atlantic Ledge and Miner's Delight were opened up in the fall of 1867 or in 1868. Can not say just when they were at their peak.

Glad to accommodate. Come again should you feel that I can help you.

Reference Works on the Philippines

MAPS and books:

Question:—"As I'm interested in the Philippines, having been there, I wonder if you could tell me where I can get a map of the group.

I notice you have information on the different subjects over there. It seems to me you should know where I could get a book on the history of the islands.

I have been over there for almost two years in the Army, but I'd like to know more about the history."—Pvt. MARTIN LOFGREN, Luke Field, T. H.

Answer, by Mr. Connor:—The best map of the entire group is published by the Government. It comprises all islands from Bashe Channel in the north to British North Borneo. It is the work of John Bach after the works of U. S. Geodetic Survey, Coast and U. S. Army surveys, Bureau of Public Works and Bureau of Lands. Therefore it must be as nearly accurate as it is possible to secure. The Bureau of Insular Affairs at Washington, D. C., or the Manila Branch of Bureau of Insular Affairs will no doubt furnish you with a copy.

Relative to historical works on the islands, go to the Public Library in Honolulu and get into their Philippine section; or if you desire to purchase, you may secure at a nominal cost the works of Dean Worcester by ordering it through the best bookstore there; or write to Brentano—Washington and New York; they will furnish you with a list of works on the islands.

The Tape-Lock Pistol

SOMETHING about Edwin Wesson and his work:

Question:—"I recently secured for my collection a ten-inch, six-shot tape-lock pistol marked "Mass. Arms Co., Chicopee Falls," on barrel and "Manarck patent 1845" on lid of tape-box.

It revolves by hand only by pressing a button inside of trigger guard. Barrel swings up to clear cylinder. Will you please give me the dope on this gun? It is the only one of the kind I ever saw."—MART F. HIGGINS, San Bernardino, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Barker:—I am very familiar with the pistol you write about, and will gladly tell you all about it. It is a very interesting one with a particularly interesting history. I had a beautiful one in my hands the other night, among four or five that the owner had in his collection. This particular one was factory new, and had the *tape* with it. Something very unusual.

Edwin Wesson, the rifle-maker of Hartford, Conn., turned out between 1837 and 1849, a heavy, clumsy revolver, marked "Leavitt's Patent Manufactured by Wesson, Stevens & Miller, Hartford, Ct." The cylinder turned either way by hand. A few were used in the Mexican War. It was 13⅞ inches long, barrel 6¾ inches, caliber .40, and they are now very, very scarce indeed.

Edwin Wesson invented for turning the cylinder

of this pistol a proposition of two gear-toothed wheels at right angles actuated by the cocking of the hammer. It certainly was ingenious in that limited space. A patent was granted shortly after his death, in 1849, and a stock company named the Mass. Arms Co. was formed. Army, navy and pocket size were made up to about 3,000 between 1849 and 1851.

Col. Colt sued them for infringement of patent, basing his case on revolving, locking and unlocking cylinder by hammer movement, and partitions between the nipples. As Colt won the case, the Mass. Arms Co. had to stop making revolvers whose cylinders revolved automatically.

Hence they adopted Maynard's tape primers, and the date on your tape-box or magazine refers to the patent for the Maynard primer. Until about the end of the Civil War they issued two revolvers of slightly different shape, both with a single nipple, which screws into the frame, each chamber in the cylinder having a pin-hole, coming opposite to the opening in the bottom end of the single nipple. The cylinder was turned by hand, after releasing it by pressure of the thumb upon a stud inside the trigger guard. One was shaped like the old one.

Length, 11½ inch, barrel 6 inch, cal. .31. One, of slightly different shape, 7¼ inch, barrel 3 inch, cal. .25. Both had six shots. I should be interested to learn which you have.

Mr. Morve L. Weaver of Visalia, Cal., has one of the old Wesson & Leavitts that revolves automatically. Go and see him if you are up that way. They are rare. I have both—the very large one which I have described, and a smaller one, 10½ inch, 5-inch barrel, .31 caliber.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose* full *return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

Too Much Territory

VARIOUS meanings attach to the word "niggerhead" in various parts of the world. It might be just as well, then, to explain that as Mr. Solomons uses the word it means a tussock of grass or sedge sticking up out of soft ground:

Question:—"I have in mind a trip by auto from Nome to Cape Horn. Quite a wild scheme, you may say. It's never been done before, but I believe it is possible. So I'm depending upon you to get me from Nome to civilized roads in Canada.

1. When does the ground dry up and Summer set in in the Yukon Valley?

2. Are there any trails that a car could negotiate through the valley, following the course of the river, to Dawson City, thence on into western Canada, down through the northwest territory into the farm belt of western Canada?

3. Where would gas and oil be next available after leaving Nome?

4. Have you any advice in regard to clothing, how heavy; what kind of weather and temperature we would be likely to encounter, insect pests, etc.?

5. How far apart are the trading-posts on the river?

Would appreciate any other information you may be able to give us regarding the trip, etc."—Thomas F. Barnett, Muskogee, Okla.

Answer, by Mr. Solomons:—You have "in mind" an auto trip from Nome to Cape Horn. Well, see to it, please, that you keep it securely "in mind," and don't let it try to actualize itself. You have as much chance of getting an auto from Nome to "the farm belt of western Canada" as you have of driving it to the planet Mars. Make it a caterpillar tractor and I'd say you could do it easily, but it would take at least five or ten years with present facilities.

Traction can not be had on the surface of Alaska and northern Canada, due to moss and wet subsoil. You could drive a month or so in the Fall after surface freezing and in the Spring after the snow was 'most gone and before the "niggerheads," etc., thawed, but you could hardly expect a car to stand up to the continuous jarring and bumping of the niggerheads.

You would doubtless have a few difficulties in Central America and South America too, which might prolong your trip another ten, twenty or thirty years, but I will leave the other "experts" (!) to tell you about them. The northern part of the continent I know, and it will be the last in the world, probably, to be amenable to self-propelled vehicles except of the caterpillar type.

You see, friend, there are no roads in Alaska except local ones of very brief length—just around the towns. There was one from Fairbanks to the Pacific (at Valdez) and another from Dawson up the river to Whitehorse (Canada, both points). But these are brief in your total journey, and the former isn't on your way. No needs are served by a road along the Yukon Valley, the river affording quick and cheap transport. There are no along-the-coast roads either.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

Turkey-Calls

HOW to make one at home:

Question:—"As I can not find any one of your experts handling information I desire I am directing this to *Adventure;* and enclosing stamped envelop. Every Fall I hunt wild turkey and have long tried to get a satisfactory turkey-call. Can you tell me of one, or where I can get it? Possibly you can give me the address of some firm making game calls."—Wesley Shemwell, Prince Frederick, Md.

Answer, by Mr. Thompson:—Von Lengerke & Antoine, Chicago, Ill., have two kinds of turkey-calls that prove serviceable. On sending to them for catalog you will get description. I use only a short piece of cane or a leaf.

Did you ever try taking a piece of thin cedar and rubbing it gently on the rib of your gun? This is about as good as anything I ever tried.

"ASK ADVENTURE" editors are appointed with extreme care. If you can meet our exacting requirements and qualify as an expert on some topic or territory not now covered, we shall be glad to talk matters over with you. Address F. K. Noyes, *Adventure*, New York.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung

Devoted to outdoor songs, preferably hitherto unprinted—songs of the sea, the lumber-camps, Great Lakes, the West, old canal days, the negro, mountains, the pioneers, etc. Send in what you have or find, so that all may share in them.

Although conducted primarily for the collection and preservation of old songs, the editor will give information about modern ones when he can do so and *IF* all requests are accompanied with self-addressed envelop and reply postage (*NOT* attached). Write to Mr. Gordon direct, *NOT* to the magazine.

Conducted by R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif.

THE most interesting feature of the work of this department, at least so far as the editor is concerned, is the gradual bringing together of scattered fragments until at last they become whole songs. A bare hint—perhaps only a single line—from one comrade is often sufficient to put the rest of us on the track, and in this way much valuable material comes in and is added to our collection.

Here are fragments—who can add to them?

Ellen Smith

(*Sent in by Jackson Taylor, Jr.*)

Come all ye good people my story to hear,
What happened to me in the June of last year,
Of poor Ellen Smith, and how she was found
Shot through the heart lying cold on the ground.

They took their Winchesters and hunted me down,
But I was away in the Monterey town.
I came back to Winton, my trial to stand,
To live or to die as the law may demand.

McArthur may hang me, my fate I don't know;
But I'm clear of the charge that is laid at my door.
I never intended to make her my wife,
But I loved her too dearly to take her sweet life.

My love lies a-sleeping in yonder graveyard;
I look through the bars, and God knows it is hard.
I know they will hang me, that is if they can,
But God knows they will hang an innocent man.

Sourwood Mountain

(*Sent in by Jackson Taylor, Jr.*)

Chickens crowin' on Sourwood Mountain,
Hey-o dee-um daddy-deedle-daddy-dee,
Git yo' gun an' let's go huntin',
Hi-dum-a-diddle a-la-day.

I got a gal at the head o' the holler,
Hey-o dee-um daddy-deedle-daddy-dee,
She won't come an' I won't foller,
Hi-dum-a-diddle a-la-day.

Big dog bark an' the little one'll bite you,
Hey-o dee-um daddy-deedle-daddy-dee,
Big gal court an' the little one'll marry you
Hi-dum-a-diddle a-la-day.

Geese in the pond and ducks in the ocean,
Hey-o dee-um daddy-deedle-daddy-dee,
Devil's in the women when they take a notion,
Hi-dum-a-diddle a-la-day.

This latter song is practically endless, since nearly any couplet may be worked into a verse. I'd be glad to get as many stanzas as possible, and particularly glad if you would tell me the approximate date and the place where they were sung.

FROM a good Tennesseean, Ned Anderson, I obtained the following bits of one of the most interesting songs that has come in for many a day. If you can help me to complete it, I'll see that the whole text is printed in an early issue.

Nigger Lost John

(*Text of Ned Anderson*)

Nigger Lost John a-goin' down the railroad track
A-waitin' for a freight train to come back.
Along come a through freight a-makin' no stop—
You oughter seen Lost John goin' for the top.
Well a go on, a Lost John,
I'm long gone!

They caught old Lost John an' put him in the pen,
The son of a gun's out an' gone again.

Nigger Lost John goin' to Bowlin' Green
A-skippin' an' a-flyin', not a shoe on his feet,
A-bummin' everybody for a bite to eat.
Well a go on, a Lost John,
I'm long gone!

THE next seems to be a genuine war-song of 1812. I first heard of it through the singing of Henry Milner Rideout, who, unfortunately, could recollect only a portion of one verse. This he later used in a story published in *Sea Stories*, where some of you may have seen it. Then C. L. Goodspeed sent in from Chicago the following longer but still incomplete version. Does any one know the rest?

(*Sent in by C. L. Goodspeed*)

Oh, now the time has come, my boys,
To cross the Yankee line,
Remember they were rebels once
And conquered John Burgoyne.
We'll pursue those haughty democrats
And pull their dwellings down,
And their state shall be inhabited
By subjects of the Crown!
We are the noble lads of Canada!
Come to arms, boys, come!

Old Seventy-six is wide awake,
Upon crutches they do lean;
With rifles leveled on us
Through spec's they take good aim.
Behind the hedges and the ditches,
And every tree and stump,
We can see the.....
And those cursed Yankees jump!
We are the noble lads of Canada!
Run for life, boys, run!

AND now a genuine old deep-sea chantey sent in by J. N. West of Bayonne, N. J. The chorus lines should, of course, be repeated with each stanza.

Homeward Bound

(*Sent in by J. N. West*)

We are homeward bound, oh that's the sound!
Good-by, fare you well!
Good-by, fare you well!
We are homeward bound for Liverpool town,
Hurray, my boys, we're homeward bound!

We are homeward bound for a roaring breeze,
We are homeward bound, so the "old man" says.

Our anchor's aweigh and the sails they are set,
And the girls we are leaving we leave with regret.

She's a flash clipper packet and bound for to go,
With the girls on her tow-rope she can not say no.

We are homeward bound once more again,
We are homeward bound, my cheery men.

We are homeward bound for the old back yard,
Then heave, my bullies, we are bound homeward.

And I wrote to Kitty and she is well,
She rooms at the "Astor" and dines at the "Bell."

We are loaded down with sugar and rum,
Good-by, fare you well!
Good-by, fare you well!
The sails are set and the breeze has come,
Hurray, my boys, we're homeward bound!

SEND all contributions of old songs, and all questions about them, direct to R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif. DO NOT send them to the magazine.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

NOVEMBER 20TH ISSUE

Besides the **complete novel** and **two complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

THE LONE RAIDER — ***Thomson Burtis***
Duty—or the code of the mountaineers.

MOSTLY BY PHONE — ***G. W. Barrington***
Luke and *Danny* were at sea—in Seminole County, Texas.

OM Part V — ***Talbot Mundy***
Underneath the Himalayas!

THE CASK — ***Rolf Bennett***
"*Luny*" *Bligh* called himself a geologist.

SHERIFF DURAND DEPUTES — ***Raymond S. Spears***
"*Roaring Sam*" was within the law.

WARDEN OF THE HERDS — ***F. St. Mars***
The ant fights formidable foes.

Still Farther Ahead

THE three issues following the next will contain *long stories* by Charles Beadle, Frederick Moore, H. C. Bailey, Hugh Pendexter, Thomson Burtis, J. Allan Dunn, W. C. Tuttle, F. R. Buckley, Alvin F. Harlow and Chief Caupolican, Harold Lamb, Arthur D. Howden Smith and William P. Barron; and short stories by Gordon MacCreagh, Nevil Henshaw, John Webb, Roy Snider, Alanson Skinner, Charles Tenney Jackson, F. St. Mars and Thomas Topham; stories of aviators in the oil fields, slave traders on the Atlantic, cowboys on the Western range, guardsmen in old Italy, unknown Africa, balata gatherers in South America, cajans in Louisiana bayous, adventurers the world around.

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*JOSEPH JASTROW, *who is writing for The Designer now, is the author of many important books on psychology: "Fact and Fable in Psychology," "The Subconscious," "The Qualities of Men," "Character and Temperament," "The Psychology of Conviction."*

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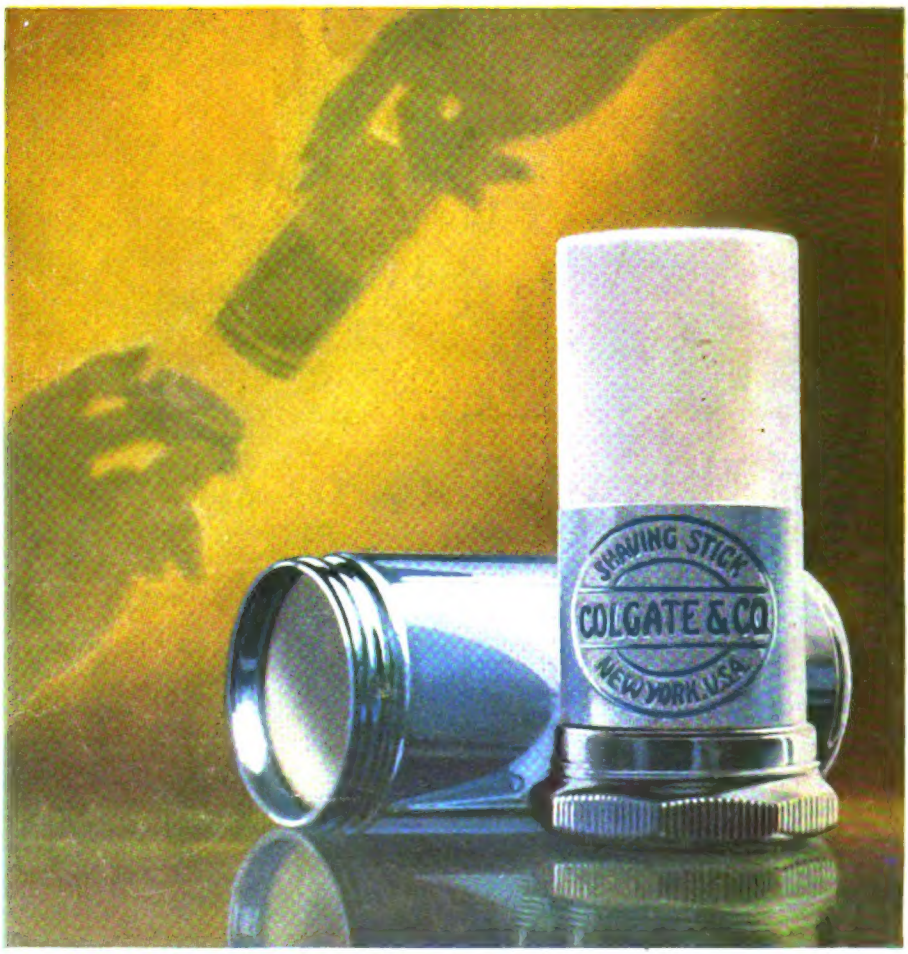

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